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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 46,740

Joanna Coles on the fragility of family life

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How to cope with meltdown

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Guns? No more dangerous than cricket bats says Philip

Alex Bellon

DUNBLANE campaigners last night said they were sickened and dismayed by the Duke of Edinburgh's comments that gun owners were no more dangerous than squash players or golfers.

The gaffe-prone Duke yesterday caused a furor by saying in a radio interview that anti-gun legislation targeting gun clubs was pointless. "I can't believe

that the members of shooting clubs are any more dangerous than members of a squash club or a golf club or anything else. I mean, they are perfectly reasonable people," he said.

He told BBC Radio Five Live: "I sympathise desperately with the people who are bereaved at Dunblane, but I'm not altogether convinced that it's the best system to somehow shift the blame on to a very large and peaceable part of the community. I mean if... look, if somebody... if a

cricketer, for instance, suddenly decided to go into a school and batter a lot of people to death with a cricket bat which he could do very easily, I mean are you going to ban cricket bats?"

Ann Pearson, of the Dunblane Snowdrop petition, said the Duke's remarks were a disgrace. "How on earth can he say that a cricketer or tennis player is no more dangerous than a gun enthusiast? I certainly cannot remember the last time a tennis player walked

into a primary school and massacred 16 children and their teacher," she said.

"To think of the Queen coming up here and laying a wreath at our school and then hearing her husband say something like this sickens me — it is the royal family giving with one hand and taking away from the other. I really do not think the monarchy has dropped with the monarchy. He has no idea what we are campaigning for."

Gill Marshall-Andrews, chairman of the Gun Con-

trol Network, set up in the aftermath of the massacre, said: "To compare guns with cricket bats is patently absurd and I'm sure the Duke of Edinburgh must regret such a stupid and insensitive remark. His views are ill-considered and out of step with public opinion. They represent the selfish sporting and commercial interests of a small minority who appear to have no regard for public safety."

The Duke said banning all handguns would not

work as it had to be enforceable and he called for existing regulations on owning guns to be tightened up.

The pro-shooting lobby was quick to come to his support. Michael Yardley, spokesman for the Sportsman's Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, said: "I'm delighted that the Duke of Edinburgh has had the courage to make this statement. Clearly there has been a scapegoating of the shooting community since the

Dunblane tragedy." In the interview, to be broadcast tonight, the Duke also defends his love of game shooting, saying it is not incompatible with his position as President of the World Wildlife Fund.

The Duke's reputation as a royal liability comes from years of poorly judged quips, most memorably when he described the Chinese during an official visit as "slitty-eyed".

The Scots, the Cayman Islanders and the Hungarians have all been the tar-

get of his remarks. Last year he appeared to brand Scots drunkards by asking an Oban driving instructor: "How do you keep the natives off the booze long enough to get them past the test?"

In 1994 he embarrassed VIPs when he asked a Cayman Islander: "Aren't most of you descended from pirates?"

The Duke also told a Briton he met in Budapest in 1993: "You can't have been here that long — you haven't got a pot belly."

Tory glee over fall in jobless

Total below 2m for first time in 6 years

Larry Elliott Economics Editor

THE Government was last night gearing up to fight a spring election campaign on the back of a booming economy after the latest set of jobless figures showed the biggest monthly fall in the official unemployment count for more than a quarter of a century.

Using the figures to shrug off the row over Commons pairing, the Cabinet's heavyweights emerged in a mass to reveal in the news that November's 85,000 drop in the number of people out of work and claiming benefit had brought the total below two million for the first time in nearly six years.

Deputy prime minister Michael Heseltine and Chancellor Kenneth Clarke ruled out an early poll on the back of the data, stressing that the picture of robust growth, falling unemployment and low inflation would look even better to the voters in a few months.

Although the City said the unprecedented drop made a new year rise in interest rates more likely, the Government used the news to restate its arguments for the election. Ministers said Britain's flexible labour market had delivered lower unemployment than Germany, France, Spain or Italy, vindicating their cautious approach to monetary union and opposition to Labour's proposal for a minimum wage.

John Major, eager to heal Tory wounds after the row over the single currency, said in a statement that the economy was now "the lion that roars in Europe". He added: "Years of hard work are now paying dividends."

Although the size of November's fall was flattered by a series of special factors, the Government believes that the economy is its trump card in the 20 weeks that now remain until the likely polling day of May 1. "The figures are getting better and better, why not wait?" said Mr Heseltine.

Six reasons why unemployment has fallen

- 1. Britain has experienced strong growth since 1992, benefiting from a large drop in interest rates after leaving the ERM.
- 2. Christmas is likely to result in a rash of short-term part-time jobs.
- 3. The tighter rules for the new Job Seekers Allowance has frightened some people off benefit.
- 4. The fraud hotline may have resulted in some people losing benefit.
- 5. Random administrative factors: the introduction of the SEA caused long delays in Job Centres, the backlog has just hit the statistics.
- 6. Random statistical factors: this month's count is over five weeks rather than the normal four.



In the absence of Mr Major in Ulster, four cabinet ministers — Mr Clarke, Mr Heseltine, Employment Secretary Gillian Shephard and Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade — appeared at a joint press conference organised to ram home the Government's "feelgood" message.

Labour said that more people believed in Santa Claus than in the Government's unemployment statistics, and released a run-down of the more than 30 changes to

the unemployment count since 1979. Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott, said the Government pretended the level of real unemployment had fallen but the number of people in the workforce had dropped by 800,000 since 1990.

"After years of fiddling the claimant figures, with more than 30 changes since 1979, the Tories can now claim that unemployment is below two million. The problem is that no one believes their bogus figures," he said.

"Much of the drop in figures can only be explained by people being driven off the benefit register and off the records altogether."

Officials at the Office for National Statistics said that a backlog in processing claimants caused by the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance had reduced the count by 20,000 in November. Earlier means-testing of claimants may have resulted in a further 5,000 fall, and the curb on postal claimants was also seen by the ONS as taking an unjust number of people off the dole.

However, officials added that the strength of the economy was also a big factor in the November fall. The seasonally adjusted drop of 85,000 was the biggest since the current series began in 1971 and is believed to be unsurpassed since Britain thawed out from the freezing winter of 1962-63.

Last month's drop, which was spread across every region, was the biggest since the high street sales over the past year and by the pick-up to 270,000 in official job vacancies — the highest since the series began in 1980.

Government strategists were particularly cheered by the fact that the biggest falls in unemployment last month were in the regions containing large numbers of key marginal seats: the South-east, the West Midlands and the North-west.

"The news is getting better all the time," Mr Clarke said. "The economy is going to continue to strengthen. The risks of changing to a completely implausible Labour Party are very clear."

City notebook, page 11; Analysts, page 12



A policeman waves a pistol as hostages freed from a guerrilla siege of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima enter a car PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN MESA

Terrorists raise stakes in Lima embassy siege

Jane Diaz-Limaco in Lima and Ian Black in London

HEAVILY-ARMED rebels who took hundreds of diplomats and businessmen hostage by posing as waiters at a lavish embassy reception in Lima were set night threatening to execute their captives one by one, starting with Peru's foreign minister.

No shots were heard from the besieged Japanese ambassador's residence after the warning, but one of the biggest hostage crises ever was ripping across the globe as anxious governments condemned terrorism, offered help and urged the Peruvian authorities to stay calm.

Reports of the number of people being held ranged from 250 to 490 after 20 guerrillas of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), carrying champagne and hors d'oeuvres, sneaked into a formal party marking the 80th birthday of Japan's Emperor Akihito.

A British diplomat, Roger Church, was reported by the Foreign Office to be inside the building but unharmed.

The rebels demanded the release of 300 jailed comrades, medical treatment for the wounded and talks with Pres-

ident Alberto Fujimori. "If in 20 minutes we do not have an answer we will begin to take our first victim, and the first victim will be foreign minister [Francisco] Tudela," the rebel commander, using the name Comandante Emilio Huertas, told Peruvian television by telephone. He said his men had mined the grounds around the residence.

Rebels, their faces masked by red and white scarves, were posted with machine-guns inside the residence.

The incident began on Tuesday evening with explosions and a hour-long exchange of gunfire with police. Two hostages and a

rebel were reported wounded. Early yesterday the rebels released about 170 hostages, most of them women, including Mr Fujimori's mother and sister. Another four male hostages were freed later. A Red Cross representative, with his hands held high, mediated between the rebels and the authorities as snipers patrolled the roofs of surrounding buildings.

Among the hostages were the ambassadors of Japan, Canada, Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba, South Korea, Germany, Austria and Venezuela; Peru's foreign and agriculture ministers; six legislators; the president of the supreme court and dozens of Japanese business people.

Britain's ambassador to Lima, John Illman, and the United States ambassador, had left the party before the guerrillas began their spectacular assault.

BBC correspondent Sally Bowen said after her release that she had been in the marquee when the explosions occurred.

"Moments later, heavy gunfire had us all flat out on the ground," she said. "The guerrillas stalked around the residence grounds threatening turn to page 3, column 1

BBC correspondent Sally Bowen Letters, page 8

Inside

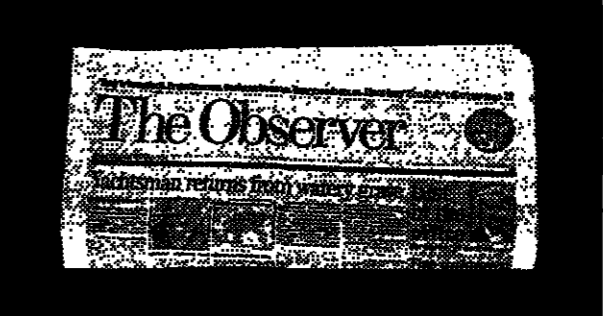
The Red Cross will distribute food parcels in Britain for the first time in 50 years to help asylum seekers facing hardship.

The European Commission is to pay peasant tobacco farmers subsidies 70 times greater than the EU allocates to fighting smoking.

A £1.26 billion US takeover of London Electricity will put half the British distribution industry in American hands.

England off-spinner Robert Croft played a leading role in restricting Zimbabwe to 256 for six in the first Test in Bulawayo.

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Sketch

Turkeys and gobbledegook



Simon Hoggart

THE end of the calendar year, and time for our political awards — possibly the last before the next election, when so many people will get their just deserts. Majorism of the Year: There have been so many, but the judges finally narrowed the choice down to two, beginning with Major's tribute to President Mitterrand. "He made a great contribution to public life, especially in France." The winner, however, had to be his account of what he knew about the arms-for-Iraq scandal, as outlined in the Scott Report: "Something that I was not aware had happened suddenly turned out not to have happened."

Labour Misrule. But the winner was this week's pairing fiddle: most specifically, Michael Heseltine's suggestion that the row was got up by Labour in order to prevent ministers from travelling abroad to sell British exports. Winner of the Year: Best speech was by Robin Cook on the Scott Report. However, Mr Cook has had quite enough praise lately, so I will say no more.

Most successful Tory was William Hague, the Welsh Secretary, who is young enough to survive the Conservative conflagration, who presided over more inward investment per head than any other minister, and who is still a fan of the rock singer Meatloaf, The Artist Formerly Known As Mince.

Kamikaze of the Year: Quentin Davies, the Tory MP who told David Willetts that he did not believe that the phrase "He wants our advice" meant "He is in want of our advice", as in "What you want is a bloody good hiding".

Mr Davies's robust scepticism obliged the committee to rule against Mr Willetts, but destroyed any lingering hope of a job for Mr Davies.

PR Cook-up of the Year: There was the breathtakingly boring Labour Hypocrisy board game produced by the Tories, plus their propaganda paper "Look" which included endorsements by several people whose permission they had not sought.

There was Labour's futile attempt to win the Today personality of the year. But in the end the panel decided on the Tory poster: "Yes it hurt. Yes it worked." As one judge put it: "This is the John Wayne Bobbitt school of political advocacy — Yes, we cut it off. Yes, we sewed it back on."

Libe Briefs, a satirical look at British politics by Steve Bell and Simon Hoggart ("this book should be in every home" — Independent on Sunday) is now available in bookshops, published by Methuen at £9.99.

TV review

Loach keeps the fires burning

Seumas Milne

The Flickering Flame BBC2

THE Liverpool dockers sacked 15 months ago for refusing to cross a picket line have long complained of a media blackout of their marathon campaign for reinstatement. It is a dispute which has attracted solidarity from port workers across three continents and become a magnet for all manner of labour movement and social dissenters, from churchpeople to itinerant road protesters.

Last night's screening of Ken Loach's painfully revealing film about the Liverpool saga cut through the mentality that drives such events to the margins of coverage and told a story of the balance of power in the workplace that echoes far beyond Merseyside or the last redoubt of its traditional docks culture.

That this piece — defiantly unfashionable in both subject and treatment — appeared on BBC television is a heroic achievement in itself. Loach is notably sparing in his excursions into TV documentary. His last offering, in 1991, targeted the campaign of false corruption allegations against the miners' union leadership.

The latest film picks up the threads of Loach's 1987 television play The Big Flame, written by Jim Allen, which portrayed an earlier phase of the dockers' struggle against casual labour. The Flickering Flame deploys all the Loach trademarks: meticulous narrative, austere and grainy film quality, black-backdrop captioning — the story told by ordinary people, an officialdom scurries for cover.

The Government and Mersey Docks and Harbour Company — whose offer of cash compensation and 40 job interviews will be voted on by the 329 sacked dockers tomorrow — are duly excoriated. So is New Labour, more controversially, the Transport and General Workers' Union, as it turns cartwheels to protect itself from legal attack over a dispute that falls foul of Britain's draconian union laws.

No doubt the story told by Loach will be dismissed as the last gasp of a doomed culture. But the Liverpool lockout is not unique — there are similar disputes in Darlington and Glasgow — and the issues he raises of insecurity, unfettered employer power and anti-union legislation seem bound to come to haunt a future Labour government.

Nancy Ralston-Smith's TV review: £2, page 10



Ghulam Mohammed, who strangled a pregnant woman and her children, lies dead in Kabul after being executed by his victim's husband yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: ZHERUDON ABDULLAH

'A current of horror ran through the crowd... as the Taliban took revenge'

Suzanne Goldenberg at first public execution

THE all-male crowd, some with rocket-propelled grenades or machine-guns slung over their shoulders, most with Kalashnikovs, clamoured over the fence, peering for a glimpse of the man who yesterday became the first to die under the new system of Islamic retribution imposed by Afghanistan's rulers.

The execution, meant as a private spectacle for Taliban foot soldiers, was a short, final chapter in a brutal story of murder. It sent a current of horror and anticipation through the crowd of 2,000.

The condemned man, Ghulam Mohammed, was convicted earlier this year of strangling a heavily pregnant woman and her three children during a robbery. Yesterday, in accordance with tribal custom and a rigid interpretation of the Sharia legal code that has been dictated by Islamist governments such as Iran's, her husband tasted revenge.

The condemned man, barefoot beneath reddish-brown baggy pyjamas and with his hands bound in front of him with blue cloth, was unloaded from a blue Toyota pick-up truck in the penalty area of a football pitch at the Aman high school in central Kabul. His executioner, Ali Khan, standing 40ft away, knelt and took aim. The condemned man raised his hands towards his face and called out for mercy. He was silenced by a two-second burst of automatic fire.

Several members of the Taliban, standing behind the avenging husband, moved towards the spot where Ghulam had fallen. It took them several moments to detect signs of life. Mr Ali was summoned and this time stood directly over the body, spraying his chest with fire. A loudspeaker called out for Ghulam's family to come forward for his body. But minutes later, five turbaned soldiers dumped the body into a white Toyota pick-up, letting the feet, which were still twitching, dangle over the edge. They clambered aboard and drove off.

"Now he is punished according to the law of Islam, in front of the people as a lesson to others," said Mohammed Alam, a spokesman for the Taliban government. "For the first time in Afghanistan and in Kabul, with the help of God, there is Islamic law and this is the first time a man has been punished according to Islamic law."

Mr Ali pronounced himself only partly satisfied. "I won't feel complete satisfaction unless the last man involved in the case is arrested," he said. "I call on the families of the remaining criminals to give themselves up so that they can be pardoned. If they are arrested by the security forces then they will meet the same fate as the dead man."

Although the shooting took place at 3.30pm in central Kabul, the Taliban members in attendance were hostile to outsiders, cutting them off and motioning them out of sight with lowered Kalashnikovs. The execution took place a few hundred yards from two patches of black paint which mark the spot where the former president, Najibullah, and his brother Ahmed Zai, were castrated and hanged on September 27, the day the Taliban took Kabul.

The Taliban vowed then to apply Islamic justice throughout the country. Yesterday's execution, the first such instance in Kabul, belies claims by Western aid agencies that the Taliban may be prepared to moderate their extreme version of Islam.

The dead man — along with a teenage girl identified only as Roya, and another accomplice, Ruhollah — was convicted during the previous regime of President Burhanuddin Rabbani of murdering Mr Ali's wife and three children and stealing 5 million Afghani — about £155.

Ghulam and Ruhollah were condemned to death, but Roya was sentenced to eight years, reduced to three on appeal, because she was a minor. The three escaped from prison in the confusion surrounding the Taliban takeover. Ghulam was recaptured in November. Some local people were pleased about Ghulam's fate. "He deserved it," said one man, standing below the flat where Mr Ali, a money changer known to keep large sums of money, had lived. Sher Mohammed

Maiwand, chairman of the residents' association, disagreed. He had alerted police after discovering the body of one of the children.

"This is a religious question but in modern times this is not good," he said. "When the Taliban came to Kabul, they brought peace, security and stability, and the restrictions they imposed have not caused problems so far. But we hope as time goes by they will ease the restrictions."

That appears unlikely, Dr Alam said. The application of an Islamic system of retribution would include amputations for thieves, and stoning or 100 lashes for those found guilty of illicit sexual relations. He said he would be prepared to carry out amputations. "Yes, yes, why not?" He said it was wrong to see this as a medieval punishment. "There is no law of retribution in America or Europe and a lot of theft takes place and a lot of women are raped."

Ulster hopes disappear

Unionists see no chance for progress in talks before election

David Sharrock, Ireland Correspondent

THE last hopes for political progress in Northern Ireland before the general election disappeared yesterday with the adjournment of the Stormont talks without agreement on how to resolve the wrangle over paramilitary weapons.

place until January 27. By then the talks chairman, the US senator George Mitchell, may have put forward his own proposals to end the weapons decommissioning deadlock. Mr Mitchell and his two co-chairmen yesterday signalled they could make their own move.

The trio said: "We will explore whether there is a basis... to put forward a solution we believe will secure agreement on the handling of decommissioning." Mr Major, making the traditional pre-Christmas prime ministerial visit to Northern Ireland, warned the IRA that Britain would never yield to violence. "If the IRA continues with violence for the next 50 years, then Britain would not change its policy," he told the Belfast Telegraph.

£60m bid for Independent

Andrew Cuff, Media Correspondent

THE Irish media boss Tony O'Reilly has offered to buy Mirror Group's stake in the Independent for £60 million, it emerged last night. A day-long crisis meeting at London's Berkeley Hotel, involving Mr O'Reilly, Mirror Group chief executive David Montgomery and Independent editor Andrew Marr, broke up with the ownership issue unresolved. It is understood that Mr Montgomery believes Mirror Group's 46 per cent stake is worth £10 million more than Mr O'Reilly, boss of the Irish Independent group, is prepared to pay.

Mr Marr is believed to have successfully fought off an attempt by Mr Montgomery to impose a 10 to 15 per cent editorial budget cut on the newspaper. Sources said he might even have won a marginal increase for the time being.

The Independent lost £18.6 million last year, and despite increasing advertising revenue and a cover price increase is heading for a £15 million loss this year. Circulation last month fell to 261,000, a drop of 4 per cent on the previous month. The six-monthly average has dropped by 9.6 per cent since this time last year. The paper's staff believe there is little scope for further cuts. More than 80 posts have been lost in 18 months. It is thought Mr O'Reilly believes that the current ownership structure and editorial cost-cutting are endangering the paper's viability.

If he assumed control, industry sources speculate that he would seek to switch management and administrative functions to Lord Hollick's United News and Media, owners of the Express titles. Journalists would move from Mirror Group's Canary Wharf headquarters to the Express offices near Blackfriars Bridge. Printing would move to West Ferry in Docklands. Mr Montgomery could face City pressure to accept Mr O'Reilly's overtures as he seeks to reschedule Mirror Group's debts.

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TV licence deal risks £500m cuts

Andrew Culf
Media Correspondent

THE BBC could face cuts of more than £500 million over the next five years, despite winning a partial victory in its campaign for an increased licence fee.

Its savings target may have to rise from 15 to 18 per cent over the five-year period after the Government announced a licence settlement broadly linked to inflation.

Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, who described it as an early Christmas present for the BBC, said the colour fee would rise by £2 to £91.50 in April 1997. The black and white fee goes up by 50p to £30.50.

In 1998 — the year the BBC faces extra costs of launching digital television — it would rise by inflation plus 3 per cent, and in 1999 by inflation plus 0.5 per cent.

In the fourth and fifth years it would increase by inflation, minus 1 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively. The settlement equates to a change over the five-year period of inflation minus 0.08 per cent.

John Birt, the BBC's director general, welcomed the first three years of the deal, but said the subsequent formula was a disappointment.

Mr Birt, who launched his campaign for an above-inflation rise for the first time in 10 years at the Edinburgh TV festival in August, said: "It is basically good news. We have got pretty much everything we asked for in years one to three. It will enable us to leap into the digital future. It is a hearty endorsement of the BBC. It has given everyone a real fillip."

But he warned that the BBC would have to "pull back" on some of its core services in

years four and five and "revisit efficiency targets" or go back to the Government for more cash.

It could mean a slowdown in planned digital services, reduced progress in cutting repeats on BBC1 and BBC2 and less scope for investment in classic costume dramas.

The BBC would also have to increase revenue from commercial activities and clamp down further on licence evasion, Mr Birt said.

Over five years the BBC has made economies of £500 million, winning praise in a report commissioned by the heritage department.

But a target of between 15 and 18 per cent savings over five years could mean more job cuts and further administrative and financial upheaval. Since 1991 the BBC's workforce has dropped by 17 per cent.

Although a £100 fee is likely to be reached by 1999, the licence fee compares favourably with BSkyB's premium package, which costs £324 a year.

Mrs Bottomley said the formula reflected the BBC's anticipated £200 million receipts from the privatisation of the transmission service next year, and the need for heavy investment in digital in 1998.

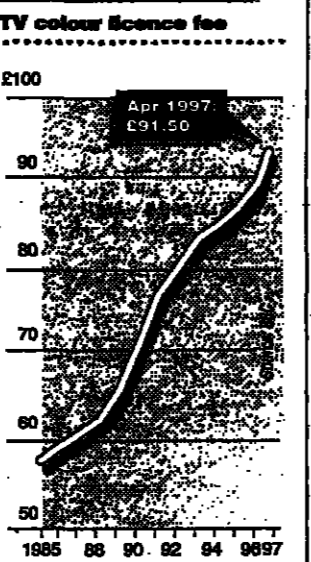
Mrs Bottomley, who fought off Treasury attempts to force a below-inflation deal, said the BBC would have to "keep its eye on the ball" in years four and five to deliver further efficiencies.

Jack Cunningham, shadow heritage secretary, said the proposals were surprising and would be reviewed by a Labour government.

Jocelyn Hay, of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer group, said the BBC could be forced to become more commercial, hitting the range and quality of programmes.

The BBC vs Satellite

Month	BBC top package	BBC licence fee
July 91	£14.90	£25.01
Jan 92	£15.00	£25.00
July 92	£15.00	£25.00
Jan 93	£15.00	£25.00
July 93	£15.00	£25.00
Jan 94	£15.00	£25.00
July 94	£15.00	£25.00
Jan 95	£15.00	£25.00
July 95	£15.00	£25.00
Jan 96	£15.00	£25.00
July 96	£15.00	£25.00
Jan 97	£15.00	£25.00



The licence formula is:

- Year one: 97-8 inflation
- Year two: 98-8 plus 5%
- Year three: 99-0 plus 0.5%
- Year four: 00-01 minus 1%
- Year five: 01-02 minus 2.5%



Madonna with co-star Antonio Banderas yesterday. "I was extremely passionate about it. I had to have that attitude otherwise I don't think I would have got the part" PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Madonna's Evita, queen for a day

Dan Glaister takes his seat for the London launch of the film whose starring role the Material Girl says was just made for her

JIMMY Nail looked distinctly shifty. "This is a bit terrifying," he muttered to the woman in the green dress sitting next to him. She smiled kindly and fixed her gaze on the banks of cameras and rows of journalists arranged before her.

She gazed imperiously over the heads of the modest crowd in the ballroom at the Hyde Park Hotel and set herself to repel all questions. Occasionally her stare would fix on a journalist, eye-balling anyone who dared to risk eye-contact. Yes, Madonna was in town, queen for a day, here to launch her latest film, *Evita*. Actually, the poster says

making the movie. It was left to the man from the Sun to introduce an element of discord into the proceedings. "How did you prepare for the death scene?" he asked Madonna. "I thought about all the nice things you've said about me," she said. Not to be outdone, the man from the Daily Mirror strove for a photo opportunity. "I brought you a present," he said, presenting the recent mother with a pink romper suit. Such sycophancy was roundly booed.

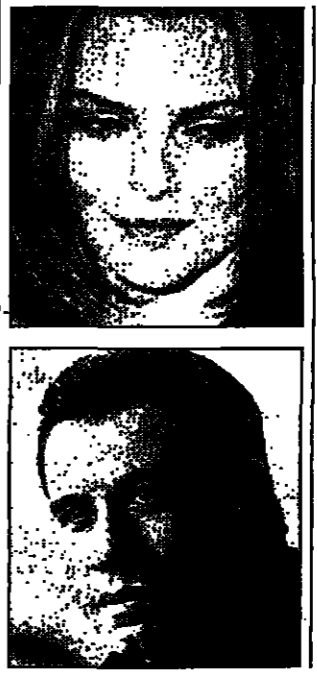
The reputed tension between star and director disappeared beneath an outbreak of mutual admiration. "We met two or three times to see if we were going to like one another," said Parker. "The most extraordinary thing is that she had to put everything on hold — apart from the baby — for two years."

Madonna talked about the tricky marriage of career and children. "Evita's going to be a tough act to follow," she said. "The next film will be one where I don't get pregnant half way through." Madonna badgered Parker for the part, claiming that Evita was the role she was born to play. "I was extremely passionate about it," she said. "I had to have that attitude otherwise I don't think I would have got the part."

But Parker, the director of *Midnight Express*, *Bugsy Malone* and *The Commitments*, was not easily seduced. When he signed up to do the film, it already had a star attached: Michelle Pfeiffer, who had been signed by the stop-start project's previous director, Oliver Stone. But Pfeiffer dropped out when Parker insisted on shooting in Argentina, leaving the way open for Madonna.

The director kept her guessing about the part until the very last moment. Jimmy Nail didn't have to suffer any such anguish for his art. "I had to audition for my part," he said. "The camera broke. But it was all right. I went along to an audition, got the gig." The blonde next to him gritted her teeth.

Credits of the past



- A**CTORS and directors connected with the film version of *Evita* since 1973:
- Stars:**
- Elaine Paige
 - Raquel Welch
 - Ann-Margret
 - Bette Midler
 - Meryl Streep
 - Barbra Streisand
 - Liza Minnelli
 - Diane Keaton
 - Olivia Newton-John
 - Elton John
 - John Travolta (left)
 - Meat Loaf
 - Elliott Gould
 - Sylvester Stallone
 - Barry Gibb
 - Jenny Holm
 - Michelle Pfeiffer (left)
- Directors:**
- Ken Russell
 - Alan Pakula
 - Francis Coppola
 - Franco Zeffirelli
 - Michael Cimino
 - Richard Attenborough
 - Oliver Stone

Death threat to hundreds besieged in Lima embassy

continued from page 1
us: "Don't lift your heads up or you will be shot."

Television viewers in Japan and Peru were bombarded with nearly non-stop coverage. In a telephone interview with Japanese TV, one guerrilla blamed Japan's support of Mr Fujimori, the son of Japanese immigrants, for the choice of target.

"They are backing Fujimori's neo-liberal policy, which is starving 13 million people to death. We're not going to take it any more."

The Japanese foreign minister, Yukihiko Ikeda, denied there had been a security lapse and said he would fly to Peru today.

The Peruvian government is under heavy international pressure to handle the situation with care, but Mr Fujimori is likely to be willing to give in to demands that would undo one of his government's greatest triumphs: quelling the rebel insurgents.

Last night, there were signs that the hostage-takers' patience was slipping: rebels apparently lobbed a grenade at the residence roof and fired shots to undermine their demand for a doctor.

Muslim teacher's outburst upsets carol singers

MADONNA Bunting, Religious Affairs Editor

AMUSLIM secondary school teacher left children in tears after accusing Asian pupils of religious betrayal for singing carols at a school Christmas show rehearsal.

Israr Khan, a maths teacher at Washwood Heath Secondary, leapt from his seat to jeer at the school's senior choir's singing of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*.

Mr Khan shouted out, "Who is your God?" and prompted the audience of younger pupils to boo the predominantly white choir and reply "Allah".

Birmingham education authority said Mr Khan did not go to work yesterday by "mutual consent". The authority insisted that he had not been suspended, although an inquiry has been launched.

Jim Collins, the head teacher of the 1,200-pupil school which is 60 per cent Asian, said: "Following an interruption at a rehearsal at the school, an incident occurred involving a member of staff. This is now subject to an internal investigation at the school."

Derek Rouse, a governor, has withdrawn his 15-year-old daughter from the school until Mr Khan makes a public apology. The girl was singing in the choir at the time of Mr Khan's outburst.

Mr Rouse's wife, Sally, said the school tried to reflect its multi-cultural composition by celebrating special occasions in the Asian calendar such as the Festival of Light and Ramadan.

"It shows an utter disregard for other religions and is hypocritical of him [Mr Khan]. I think it's disgusting the way he got up in front of all the young kids."

The rehearsal was for a Christmas show for parents, held last night, featuring traditional Christmas carols.

Eighteen-year-old Oxy Malik, a Muslim pupil at Washwood, who was at the disrupted rehearsal, said he was disgusted by Mr Khan's behaviour.

He said Mr Khan had been upset because Muslim boys and girls in the choir were saying that Jesus was their God by participating.

A 17-year-old girl singer in the choir, who did not wish to be named, admitted the booing reduced her to tears.

"It was upsetting. We had put so much work into it and this has ruined it."

A religious teacher at the Jame Masjid mosque, Bordesley Green, Birmingham where Mr Khan worships, said he believed the school should not force Muslim children to sing about and praise Christianity.

"Muslims would consider that as an insult to our religion. But I disagree with the way Mr Khan shouted across his point during the assembly," said Farooq Abdurrahman.

Yahya Yacob, manager of Birmingham's Islamic Resource Centre, said it was up to individual Muslim children whether or not they wished to take part in celebrating Christmas.

He said of Mr Khan: "I just cannot understand why he did not raise his concerns earlier with the leaders of the school choir."

Mr Khan, who is known as a devout Muslim and is organising a school pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, refused to comment yesterday.

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Corrupt MPs 'should face 7 years jail'

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

MPs should face up to seven years in prison if they are convicted of accepting bribes involving their parliamentary duties, a Home Office consultation document proposed yesterday.

The document, produced after Lord Nolan's inquiry into Standards of Public Life recommended a review of the law — says there are serious drawbacks in the present system which allows MPs to be immune from prosecution under the 1989 Bill of Rights.

It is published as Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, is investigating the "cash for questions" affair after the collapse of the libel action brought against the Guardian by ex-minister Neil Hamilton and lobbyist Ian Greer. Mr Hamilton and fellow minister, Tim Smith, were both accused of accepting cash from Mohamed al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods, to ask parliamentary questions.

The consultation document is critical of the present procedure which prevents prosecution of corrupt MPs or others involved. Three options for change are put forward.

One would make MPs subject to criminal law by introducing a general waiver from the protection of the Bill of Rights in cases involving bribery. The current system of allowing MPs to choose whether to waive their rights is deemed unacceptable.

The second would leave Parliament to decide by resolutions which breaches of behaviour by MPs should be a matter of privilege and which should go to the courts.

The third would allow the institution of criminal proceedings against an MP or peer to be subject to a full vote of the House of Commons or House of Lords.

"A difficulty with this option is that it might be seen by the public as importing a political element into prosecution dimensions," says the document.

"It would be particularly difficult presentationally if a decision to allow, or not to allow, a criminal prosecution were seen to have been taken on party political lines. There could be suspicion that members of the majority party were less likely to face prosecution than others."

The document will now go to the Committee of Standards and Privileges for MPs to consider the best option to pursue next year.

Labour leader recalls boyhood escape attempt



Cherie Booth, wife of Tony Blair, touring a sports complex in Peckham, south London, yesterday. Earlier, he defended her right to privacy

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GOODWIN

Mystery Cassandra column turns its fire on the Mirror

Kamal Ahmed

IT HAS blasted both Labour and Conservatives. Now, like Frankenstein turning on his maker, a Cassandra column has aimed its fire at the Daily Mirror, the newspaper that brought the nation the original version.

Yesterday the Tribune newspaper published the third of its anonymous Cassandra columns, this time said to be written by a senior Mirror journalist. It attacks the Mirror for being "morally bankrupt", for slavishly copying the Sun and for becoming "a parody of itself".

Last month the first column, said to have been written by a senior Labour MP, said Tony Blair would be "isolated and weakened" by the end of next year and face a leadership challenge.

The second, attributed to a senior Conservative MP, attacked John Major for being "terminally inadequate".

Press efforts to identify the authors have failed.

Cassandra first appeared in the Mirror before the second world war. Journalists Bill Connor and later Keith Waterhouse wielded tremendous influence in a column that attacked politicians and the arts establishment.

The Tribune version says: "Once made spectacularly financially bankrupt by Robert Maxwell, [the Mirror] has now become morally bankrupt... Old-fashioned tabloid journalism has been sacrificed on the altar of profit."

"In place of discursive articles on major political parties, read all about Paul Gascoigne and Oasis — anything that is the lowest and coarsest common denominator."

Blair grounded on flying start

Rebecca Smithers
Political Correspondent

TONY Blair barely had time to fasten his seatbelt before the stewardess became suspicious.

"I don't think I actually saw your boarding pass," she told the nervous passenger. "Don't tell anyone, but I'm running away," he whispered, before being booted off.

This was not the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition trying to escape from the manic world of Westminster, but Blair the runaway, 14 years old and so unhappy at the prospect of returning to his authoritarian Scottish boarding school that he tried to flee the country.

The confession of his escape 30 years ago was made in a television interview last night with Des O'Connor, and was a revelation even to his closest aides at Westminster.

Deposited at Newcastle station by his parents for his return to Fettes College in Edinburgh, the young Blair slipped out of his school clothes and went to Newcastle airport. Despite having no passport and no airline ticket, he evaded security checks and was only discovered on the plane, which he recalls might have been going to the Bahamas.

"It was the craziest thing I have ever done," he admitted. "My parents saw me off on the train. I went down the carriage and got off the other end, went into the gents",

changed into my casual clothes and went outside the station.

"Newcastle airport in those days was not quite like it is now. I got into a group of people who were going out on a charter flight. I think it was to the Bahamas.

"I snuck on to the plane, and we were about to take off when the stewardess said: 'I don't think I actually saw your boarding pass'."

In a rare interview, Lord Callaghan, aged 84, a right-winger, makes several awkward comments, not least saying that he is unhappy with the distinction between "old" and "new" Labour. He defines himself as "original" Labour.

He joins the ranks of the former Labour leaders, such as the late Lord Wilson and the former foreign secretary, Lord Healey, who have made life difficult for their successors.

Mr Blair remembers his days at Fettes with little affection, and hated the notorious "ragging" system. "The rules at that time were incredibly strict, when you had to polish

other boys' shoes. I didn't like that," he said.

Mr Blair's father Leo said yesterday that his son settled down soon after, when he was moved to a more liberal house in the school.

His former housemaster, Eric Anderson, said the young Blair was "always a bit of a rebel" and added: "I do recall the incident. Tony was eventually delivered by car by his father. As technically he wasn't yet back at school, we saw it as a matter for his family."

The headmaster of Fettes, Malcolm Thynne, seemed sympathetic to the young Blair's plight. In a statement last night he said: "Fettes was a pretty tough, authoritarian school during the 1960s and it is understandable that some pupils found the regime restrictive."

Newcastle airport threw a spanner in the works, however, by claiming that they have never run direct charter flights to the Bahamas. And, pressed to clarify Labour policy on truancy, education and employment, a spokesman David Blunkett said: "We do not wish to be drawn into this."

Mr Blair's appearance on the TV programme provides the latest glimpse into his past and the more personal side of his life, hot on the heels of his slot on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs last month, when his record selection was scrutinised by the media.

Earlier yesterday he was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour, when he strongly defended the right of his wife, Cherie Booth, a barrister, and their three children, to privacy.

"We should be able to get to the stage in this country where people can run for public office without their spouse, their children, being targets," he said.

'It was the craziest thing I ever did. My parents were pretty upset'

Callaghan defends party's heritage

Former Prime Minister warns against severing union links

Ewen MacAskill, Chief
Political Correspondent

THE former Prime Minister, Lord Callaghan, yesterday joined the ranks of those expressing concern over Tony Blair's reform of the Labour Party, especially links with trade unions.

In a rare interview, Lord Callaghan, who headed the last Labour government, warned Mr Blair against breaking the party's traditional links with the unions.

In a side-swipe at some of the modernisers, he predicted their room for manoeuvre on union reform will be limited by the many party members steeped in the party's history and traditions.

On the party's approach to

law and order, he accused Labour spokesmen of accepting Tony myths that his administration had been soft on crime. "They seem to have been brainwashed by Conservative propaganda as everybody else has been."

Although basically in sympathy with much of Mr Blair's programme, Lord Callaghan, aged 84, a right-winger, makes several awkward comments, not least saying that he is unhappy with the distinction between "old" and "new" Labour. He defines himself as "original" Labour.

He joins the ranks of the former Labour leaders, such as the late Lord Wilson and the former foreign secretary, Lord Healey, who have made life difficult for their successors.



Lord Callaghan

as a supportive interview, he recognises that time has moved on, different conditions apply now and the same policies cannot be applied as at his time. There is an evolving relationship with the unions.

Lord Callaghan, speaking to the New Statesman, is most exercised about Labour's relations with the unions, stating unequivocally: "I would be very opposed to breaking the relationship between the trade unions and the party. And I suspect most party members would agree."

"It is part of our heritage and it is instinctive in the party and movement that we should keep the link. Anyone who doesn't believe that doesn't understand our history or the natural foundation of our party."

There is widespread suspicion in the unions and sections of the party that Mr Blair wants to go much further in union reform.

Red Cross parcels for London

Alison Daniels

FOR the first time in 50 years the Red Cross is to distribute food parcels in the UK. The recipients will be destitute asylum seekers in London.

The charity has identified 300 people whom it says are facing severe hardship as a result of government legislation withdrawing benefits from certain categories of asylum seekers.

The parcels, containing tinned fish, sweetcorn, kidney beans, potatoes, cheeses and tea and coffee, will be handed out over Christmas and the New Year to refugees

at three London day centres beginning tomorrow.

The distribution has been organised with the Refugee Council and the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. The £10,000 cost will be met by Red Cross emergency funds. It is the first time the Red Cross has taken such action in the UK since it fed people made homeless after serious flooding in 1947.

The charity's director general, Mike Whittam, said the organisation had been monitoring the situation faced by asylum seekers. He said fears expressed to the Home Office since the legislation came into force this summer had

now been realised. Under a High Court ruling in October, local authorities have a duty to provide basic assistance to destitute asylum seekers under the 1948 National Assistance Act but Mr Whittam said many people were surviving on one meal a day.

He said the organisation was not making any political statement. A Home Office spokesman said the Government had made its position on benefits and asylum seekers clear in the summer.

The Medical Foundation's director, Helen Bamber, said the Red Cross gesture was indicative of the crisis facing asylum seekers.

"Although local authorities

are now required to provide basic food assistance, some provide accommodation and nothing else. Some of our clients have been left hungry and several have attempted suicide."

At the foundation's centre, the cousin of a 56-year-old Somali woman who arrived in the UK two months ago described how his relative had regularly gone hungry.

The man, who did not want to be named, said he and his wife had attempted to support their cousin but they could not manage. "I live on income support and I have five children. She is an old woman, she has nowhere to go and nothing to eat."

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OnLine G2 page 12

صلى الله عليه وسلم

Decision angers anti-smoking campaigners

EU supports small tobacco farmers

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE European Commission came down firmly on the side of peasant tobacco farmers yesterday with a decision to pay them subsidies 70 times greater than the amount the European Union allocates to fighting smoking.

After a heavy lobbying campaign by the tobacco industry, a huge demonstration by farmers and weeks of argument among officials, the 30 commissioners voted heavily in favour of retaining the subsidies, even though they will also step up the campaign to encourage people not to smoke.

The decision gives the estimated 135,000 growers, mainly in Italy and Greece, subsidies of about £800 million a year for their low-grade tobacco. It means 80 per cent of their income will come in a cheque from the EU. The campaign against smoking will receive just £12 million.

Only two of the 20 commissioners supported a phasing out of EU support for tobacco production. Jacques Santer, the Commission president, had earlier made it clear that he believed it was not the right time for such a drastic move.

The Commission has limited powers to intervene as legislation against smoking remains the prerogative of member states.

At a tense press conference, Padraig Flynn, the Irish social affairs commissioner who has campaigned for the subsidies to be phased out, was clearly annoyed with his fellow commissioner Franz Fischler, in charge of agricultural matters, who had secured the continuation of the funding.

"Of course I am unhappy with the result today. I believe there is a clear contradiction to EU policy. Half a million people in Europe die from the effects of smoking each year. This is the single biggest cause of preventable death in the community," Mr Flynn said.

Beside him, a more composed Mr Fischler said: "More than 150,000 families in the EU depend on tobacco production. Let's be clear about it, we cannot offer them an alternative: most of their holdings are less than a hectare in size and there is no alternative crop in Europe that could be substituted."

"I do not imagine anyone would stop smoking because had earlier made it clear that he believed it was not the right time for such a drastic move.

The Commission has limited powers to intervene as legislation against smoking remains the prerogative of member states.

Mr Flynn retorted: "If you provide substantial subsidies, you reduce the price of the product."

Although tobacco is produced in eight of the 15 member states, the Italians and Greeks produce the overwhelming majority of the crop, an unspecified amount of it used for use. European grown tobacco provides about 23 per cent of the European market.

Officials in favour of reducing subsidies claimed the Commission was reverting to its traditional support for producer interests rather than the public's.

Thousands of peasant farmers congregated in Brussels earlier this week to protest at any reduction in their subsidies.

The Commission is proposing to reassign its subsidies towards farmers producing higher quality tobacco — which will mean fewer may qualify for aid — and will offer some help for growers who diversify into other crops.

Its rather lower level support for the anti-smoking campaign will consist of exhorting member states to step up measures to discourage cigarette smoking by increasing taxation and reducing the tar content in the tobacco on sale.

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The British singer, Charlotte Cavelle, tops the bill in the Folies Musicales inaugural show at the Royal Palace, which looms incongruously from the tiny Alsatian village of Kirrwiller (below)

Entertainers campaign for the right to rest

Paul Webster in Paris

THOUSANDS of actors, musicians, stagehands and television production staff will put on a national street show today to protest the right to rest.

Rehearsals have been going on for more than a week, marked by theatre sit-ins, attempts to block traffic and roadshows to win public support for the entertainment industry's unique employment conditions. Protest leaders, who have read out their demands to audiences at theatres throughout the country, said they were preparing new forms of protest to add colour to traditional marches, as talks begin on unemployment pay.

Encouraged by a government determined to cut welfare deficits, employers will tell trade unions that "resting allowances" have become too expensive since they were fixed 30 years ago. Under present conditions, freelancers are entitled to a year's dole of up to £2,000 a month if they have worked 507 hours, roughly equal to three months' engagements.

The deal results in payouts of more than £300 million a year and is considered a dis-

guised subsidy to the cultural industry. Last year, resting money was paid to 40,000 people, including 12,000 musicians, 5,500 actors, 4,700 photographers and nearly 12,000 television, theatre and cinema technicians.

The official employment fund, Unedic, which is supported by workers' and employers' contributions, wants the minimum number of working hours to be raised to 676 which would exclude thousands of temporary staff already threatened by an explosion in casual employment.

Since the partial privatisation of state television six years ago, the number of showbusiness workers receiving resting pay has doubled. Thousands of permanent jobs have been done away with even in nationalised industries.

Although the increase in casual labour has led to

abuse, with both workers and employers negotiating dubious contracts to obtain the 507 hours, protests over the right to a year's paid rest has opened the wider issue of the government's cultural policy.

The Socialist Party first secretary, Lionel Jospin, said creative opportunities would be reduced further next year because the cultural budget would fall by 9 per cent, despite Jacques Chirac's election promise to fix spending at 1 per cent of the national budget.

Interest is also focused on the former culture minister, Jack Lang, whose actress daughter, Valeria, is a leader of the movement.

As she prepared for today's protest, she said she was dreaming of a national march which would close museums, libraries, cinemas, bookshops, television stations and theatres.

"I really believe that the state wants to cheapen the cultural level of the electorate," she added. "Without subsidies, creators will die out, and without culture there is no freedom to think. And without freedom of thought, violence will reign. We want to show that a country without culture is a dead country."

Sequins shine among the beetroots

A dying town in rural France's Protestant hinterland is staging a topless comeback, writes Paul Webster in Kirrwiller

A THIN evening fog spread across the tiny Alsatian villages set in a flat landscape among acres of desolate beetroot fields.

Just when it seemed that all life had snaked indoors and closed the shutters, multi-coloured lights on a shining white building broke the darkness.

On the boundaries of Kirrwiller, a village of only 450 people, the 1,000-seat concert hall of the newly built Royal Palace was being prepared for dinner and a Lido-style topless Christmas show for 850 workers from a farm equipment firm. By the time its 10-month season ends in the summer, nearly 140,000 visitors will have made a similar pilgrimage to a theatre whose only serious French rivals are in Paris.

The inaugural revue, called Folies Musicales Show, was directed and choreographed by two Britons, Michael Smith and Roland Brine, and stars a British singer, Charlotte Cavelle. There are three British dancers in the topless troupe, but although Kirrwiller pays Las Vegas and Sun City fees to attract stars, this is very much a regional affair.

Apart from a few visitors from Germany to the east and Belgium and Luxembourg to the north, the Royal Palace depends on local audiences from one of

the strictest Protestant areas of Europe.

If the moral watchdogs are absent and the pastor keeps his counsel, this is the only hope of saving a dying rural community.

It has taken nearly 50 years for the music hall to grow from a popular rural inn into a family business which risked a \$2.5 million-plus investment in the new building, decor, costumes and salaries. The owner, Pierre Meyer, aged 44, is the son of the village primary schoolmaster.

"My mother was the real powerhouse behind developing the entertainment side," Mr Meyer said. "When I took charge, my father couldn't understand why I wanted to change our profitable weekend dance formula but my mother, who still works with me, encouraged me to strike out."

This season's seats were sold out before the opening. Prices — £30 all-in — are about a third of Kirrwiller's Paris rivals.

Mr Meyer likes to give the impression of a relaxed,

modest host, playing down his gifts as an impresario, although he points out that attempts to copy his success have always flopped. He chooses the theme of his revue and, to open the new theatre, he spotted Ms Cavelle, a former Royal College of Music student, singing in Berlin.

"I was given my first contract for Cats in Hamburg almost immediately after leaving the college, and have been in Germany since then," she said. "After Berlin, Alsace was a bit of surprise. Kirrwiller is such a remote place that my parents thought they had lost their way when they drove here."

The singer was asked to choose songs from her musical comedy repertoire as centrepieces for a bill which includes a contortionist, magicians and a dare-devil motorcycle act. But, with building going on, Mr Meyer had to call on outside producers for the first time, and the factory and pensioners' clubs that make up most of his custom were not bowled over by the Broadway-style routines.

Roxane Rosini, the show's dominating hostess whose extravagant costume is a key part of Kirrwiller's sequined glamour, said there was hostile whistling when the revue opened.

"American-style musical comedy has never been a real success in France, especially as the songs are in English," Ms Rosini said. "I'm a local girl and know what these people like. They are not afraid of a bit of bawdiness."

"The older ones have



only experienced the war and hard work and have not even visited Paris. They want to make up for lost time and see what they've been missing. Topless dancers don't shock them."

The Royal Palace, which has more than 70 full-time staff, is being expanded ready for next season's show, an Alsatian Holiday on Ice. A casino could develop alongside hopes that Strasbourg, 30 miles away, could become the European Union's permanent capital.

"Deauville's casino owner has been to see me to talk things over," Mr Meyer said. "There appear to be no real problems standing in the way."

Whether Kirrwiller's two churches would swallow this step closer to Las Vegas is anyone's guess, but it would need a brave priest to oppose the best hope of saving the place.

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Islam on the march

Turks welcome Rafsanjani

Chris Nuttall in Ankara

RELATIONS between Turkey and its closest ally, the United States, will take another dive today when its first Islamist prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, welcomes his Muslim "brother", President Hashemi Rafsanjani of Iran, on a three-day visit.

The event represents another strike by Mr Erbakan against the United States' "dual containment" policy aimed at isolating Iran and Iraq. The leader of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party has promised his supporters he will strengthen ties with the Muslim world.

At the weekend, he snubbed the European Union, refusing an invitation to dine with leaders in Dublin. In September, he dodged a meeting with the American defence secretary, William Perry, who was visiting Ankara. Last week, the US state department said it would be greatly concerned if Turkey signed a defence industry co-operation deal with Iran.

On Tuesday, Mr Erbakan told the visiting Iranian transport minister: "Co-operation between Turkey and Iran in the defence industry

sector is in the interests of both countries." That had nothing to do with Turkey's membership of Nato, he added.

Mr Erbakan visited Tehran in August, his first big foreign trip. He was there for the signing of a \$12.5 billion deal for Iran to supply natural gas along a pipeline yet to be built.

His visit came a week after President Clinton initiated a bill threatening sanctions against anyone investing in Iran's energy industry because of the country's sponsorship of terrorism. Turkey is facing an energy crisis and wants to boost trade with its neighbours.

But the secular pro-Western establishment which still dominates Turkish society is uneasy about closer relations with Iran.

Turkey also signalled this week it would request exemption from United Nations sanctions against Iraq, despite the relief it would now be getting through Resolution 986, the oil-for-food deal.

Mr Erbakan has also announced the end of Operation Provide Comfort, the five-year-old mission to protect the mainly Kurdish region of northern Iraq from President Saddam Hussein.

Teachers and students fear second Iranian revolution

A conservative backlash by the clerical leadership is being felt on the campuses, writes John Lancaster in Tehran

A YOUNG undergraduate says he no longer speaks in class for fear that something he says will land him in jail. A professor frets that his contacts with Western academics will cost him his job. Another is more careful than ever to begin his lectures with the declaration: "In the name of God."

All are feeling the effects of "Islamisation", a campaign by Iran's clerical leadership to wipe out what it sees as liberal tendencies among professors and students.

The crackdown is part of a broad conservative backlash against advocates of greater political and social freedom, among them President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, whose term expires next year.

Magazines and newspapers have been closed, academics harassed, and a virtual freeze placed on the publication of new books, save for the most orthodox of religious texts. Police scour affluent areas for illegal satellite dishes and other emblems of Western decadence.

A prominent leftwing journalist, Faraj Sarkouhi, disappeared last month while trying to leave the country to join his wife and children in Germany. Western diplomats suspect he was abducted by Iranian intelligence agents.

"There have been a number of indications that the social climate in the Islamic Republic is becoming less tolerant," said Maurice Copthorne, a Canadian lawyer who serves as the United Nations special representative on human rights in Iran. "The condition of human rights in ... Iran may well have deteriorated."

The long-term significance of the backlash remains unclear. The history of the Iranian revolution has been defined by tension between moderates and radicals, pragmatists and ideologues. In the view of some analysts, the latest crackdown is but another lull — one that may already have reached its zenith.

After the revolutionary excesses of the 1980s, such as the *fatwa* issued against the

author Salman Rushdie, Iran began to moderate its policies under President Rafsanjani, who was elected to the first of two four-year terms in 1989. Political debate flourished. Women were allowed to wear makeup again.

But President Rafsanjani's politics have brought him into conflict with more conservative politicians, in particular Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader, and Ali Akbar Nouri, speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the current favourite to win presidential elections scheduled for June.

The conflict intensified before assembly elections in March. Conservative Muslims faced a challenge from a new crop of more pragmatic politicians, generally described as technocrats. Their unexpectedly strong showing alarmed conservatives, who accused them of being "liberals".

The right has been flexing its muscles. Some analysts suggest that Iran is undergoing a second cultural revolution, the first having occurred in the early 1980s, when campuses were shut and roving bands of street thugs terrorised the country's Westernised elite in the name of God. — Washington Post.

سكنا من الامم

Kenyan police kill three students

Greg Barrow in Nairobi

THREE students have been shot dead by Kenyan police in a wave of rioting at university campuses.

The latest shooting occurred at Kenyatta University campus, Nairobi, where hundreds of students had gathered to commemorate a student who had been shot dead by police at Egerton University near the Rift Valley town of Eldoret on Tuesday.

Maina Kariuki, chairman of the Kenyatta University students' association, said: "We were just marching inside the campus, waving leaves and twigs to signify peace, when the police opened fire. We were not armed, we had nothing, but they decided to shoot and kill."

The students scattered to

avoid live ammunition and tear gas canisters fired by police positioned near the entrance to their campus. The gate is now pockmarked with bullet holes and spent cartridges lie on the ground.

Shadrack Amos, a student who narrowly avoided being killed, said: "I was near the gate when they started shooting. There was one policeman who aimed at my neighbour. The first time he missed, but then he shot him through the heart and he died on the ground."

A circle of rocks has been placed on the pavement where the first victim fell. The bloodstained ground has been covered by the dead student's exercise books and a small branch he was waving when he was shot.

The authorities announced later that two policemen had been arrested and further in-

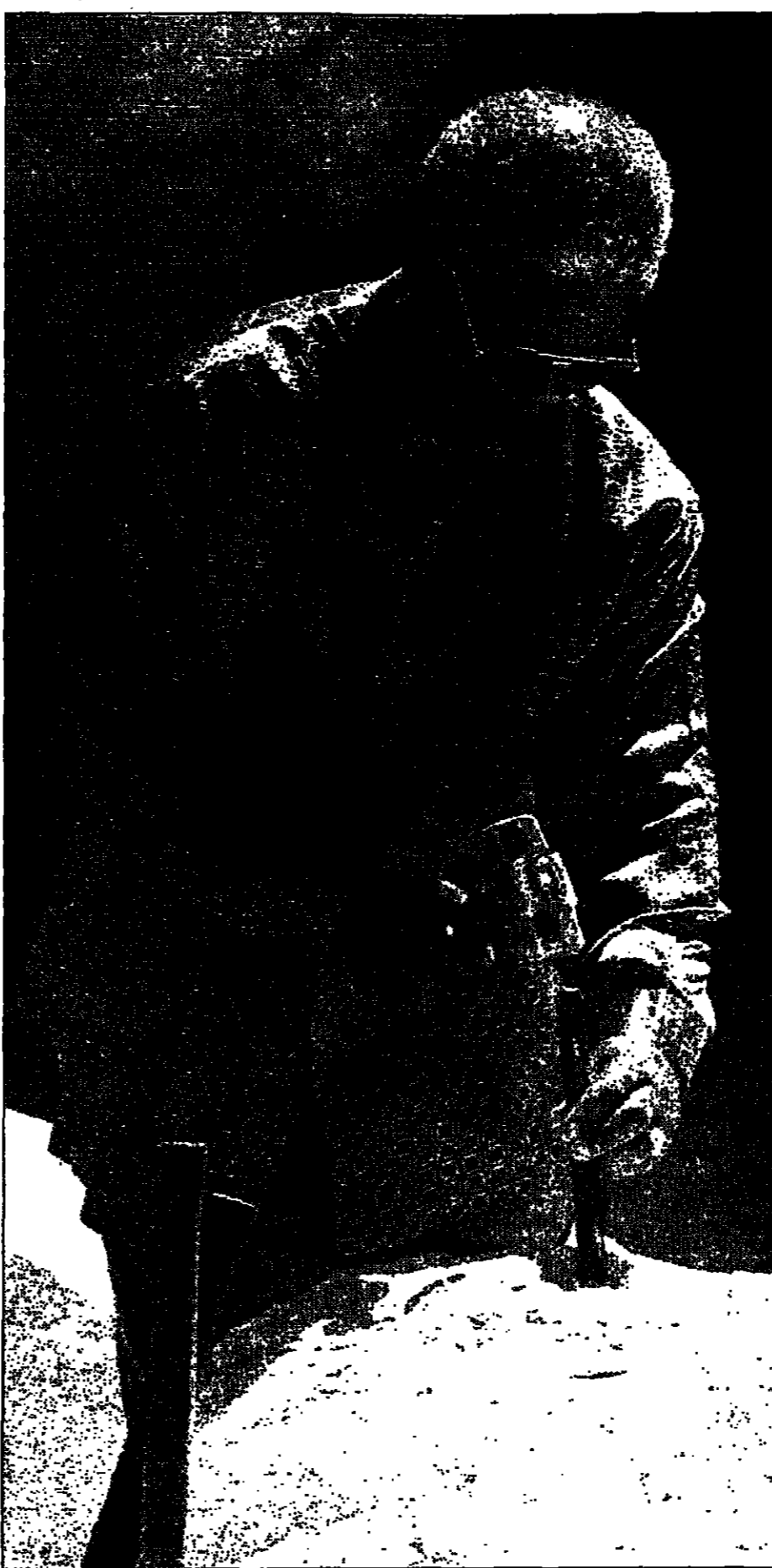
vestigations would be made.

Kenyan students regularly demonstrate about standards in the universities and the distribution of education loans, which they say go to the sons and daughters of civil servants and government supporters.

President Daniel arap Moi, who is also chancellor of several universities involved in demonstrations, has called on students to stop taking their grievances on to the streets. Last month, a riot by students at Nairobi University closed the road which leads up to President Moi's residence. Cars driving up it Road were stoned and burning barricades set up.

The education minister, Joseph Kamotho, stressed that the government had not encouraged police to use excessive force in controlling public demonstrations.

Museum plan for Mandela jail



President Nelson Mandela chips at a rock in the Robben Island quarry during a visit to the island where he spent 18 years in captivity. PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE HUTCHINGS

News in brief

Burma loses EU trade privileges

BURMA'S special trading status with the European Union was withdrawn yesterday because of concerns in the European Commission about the use of forced and slave labour.

The move, which will remove about £10 million-worth of trade privileges in the form of reduced tariffs on Burmese commerce with Europe, follows complaints from international labour and trade union organisations about the conditions in the country's factories and sweatshops.

It is the first time the EU has removed privileged trading status from a third world country, although it has already restricted the issuing of visas to Burmese officials because of its poor human rights record. — *Stephen Bates, Brussels.*

Bhutto's husband 'to go free'

A COURT in Karachi yesterday ordered the release of Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of Pakistan's ousted prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party.

A spokesman for Ms Bhutto's party said a bench of the Sindh high court had declared Mr Zardari's detention on public order charges void and ordered his release.

Dozens of PPP supporters gathered outside Landhi jail on the outskirts of Karachi to welcome him on his release.

President Farooq Leghari sacked Ms Bhutto's government on November 5 on charges of corruption and misrule, which she has rejected. Soon afterwards her husband was detained. — *Reuter, Karachi.*

Israel raids Lebanon

ISRAELI warplanes attacked suspected guerrilla targets in south Lebanon last night after launching similar raids in the morning, Lebanese security sources said.

Two planes fired rockets into the Iqlim al-Toufah ridge, which is north of Israel's south-Lebanon occupation zone and is controlled by pro-Islamic Hizbullah guerrillas.

There was no word on casualties. Israeli planes also attacked Hizbullah targets on the ridge in the morning.

Earlier, Hizbullah fired mortar bombs into the Israeli outpost of Blat on the edge of its occupation zone but there were no casualties, pro-Israeli militia sources said.

The air raids were the first since Sunday, when Israeli aircraft struck in south-east Lebanon. — *Reuter, Nabatieh.*

UN team in mock execution

UNITED NATIONS observers monitoring the ceasefire in war-torn Tajikistan were subjected to a mock execution by government troops, the UN mission said in Dushanbe yesterday.

"Military observers were subjected to blatant physical and verbal abuse [and] ordered to line up for execution," it said in a statement. The mock execution took place on Sunday and is the second such incident this month.

The statement said four military officers from Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Poland and Uruguay travelling to Germ, east of Dushanbe, were stopped at a government checkpoint.

They were made to stand in a field where government soldiers fired around them. The soldiers then started firing at an unmarked car and the observers fled. — *Reuter, Dushanbe.*

Rao is pressed to quit

LEADERS of India's Congress party yesterday asked the former prime minister P. V. Narasimha Rao — who has been charged in three corruption cases — to step down from the last post he holds in the country's oldest party.

Mr Rao, who led Congress to its worst defeat in general elections earlier this year, resigned as party president in September after a court had summoned him to testify in a criminal conspiracy case. He denied wrongdoing.

He has refused to relinquish his post as head of the party's parliamentary bloc, the Congress Parliamentary Party.

Twenty-one members of the CPP's executive committee and three office-bearers asked Mr Rao to quit. — *Reuter, New Delhi.*

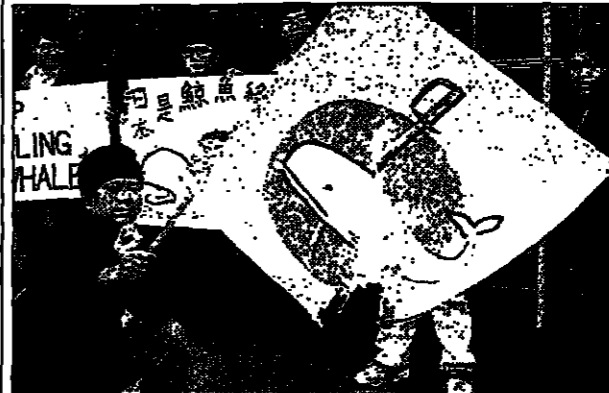
Corsican 'leader' investigated

THE suspected leader of Corsica's most violent separatist group was placed under formal investigation yesterday for a bombing that was part of an alleged extortion effort.

The move against Francois Santoni, who is suspected of leading the Front for the National Liberation of Corsica (FLNC)-Historic Wing, was the toughest yet in the crackdown by Paris.

The FLNC has claimed responsibility for most of the recent bombings on the island, and has escalated its 21-year-old fight for independence.

On Saturday, two days after a guardhouse was blown up at a holiday complex, police accused the militants of using extortion to finance their campaign. They said last week's attack by five masked men was an effort to extort funds. — *AP, Paris.*



A protester burns a poster outside the Japanese mission in Taipei yesterday, condemning plans to increase the catch of minke whales near the South Pole. PHOTOGRAPH: EDOE SHW

Turkey invites nuclear bids

TURKEY has invited tenders for the construction of the first nuclear power plant on the Mediterranean coast.

The energy minister, Recai Kutan, said the plant near the town of Mersin on the southern coast was essential. "Turkey will face serious energy shortages in the years to come unless it takes dramatic measures. There will be more such plants after work on the first one gets under way," he said.

Critics, including Greece, have pointed out that the facility, Turkey's first, will only supply 2 per cent of the country's needs by the time it comes on stream in 2006. — *Chris Nottall, Ankara.*

Sex scandal prompts refusal

A CHILDREN'S choir from Meursault, close to the eastern French town of Dijon, has turned down an invitation to sing in Belgium because of the recent paedophile murder scandal which has claimed at least four girls. The French children were to have stayed with the parents of Belgian choir members in the northern town of Merkplas in May. — *Reuter, Brussels.*

Fears grow that Burundi may invade Tanzania

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg

CENTRAL Africa faces the prospect of another catastrophic conflict, according to Western diplomats in the region. Experts trying to bring an end to Burundi's civil war believe the country may be about to invade Tanzania, to hit Hutu rebel bases there.

The bases are swollen with fighters driven from eastern Zaire and officials fear Burundi's overwhelmingly Tutsi army will soon strike to prevent the largest Hutu rebel group — the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) led by Burundi's former interior minister, Leonard Nyanzoga — from re-establishing a foothold after being routed from Zaire.

Raymond Chrétien, the United Nations special envoy; Aldo Ajello, the European Union envoy; and José Ayala Lasso, the UN human rights commissioner, have all visited Burundi in recent weeks. Senior officials among the parties said they sensed a new bullishness within Burundi's army after it joined the Rwandan-led invasion to

clear the Hutu refugee camps in Zaire.

"There are some very worrying signals that the army intends to strike against the [Hutu] CNDD bases in Tanzania. After the success against the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, the army does not want to let the rebels off the hook. But it wouldn't be like going into Zaire. The Tanzanian army will not stand by," an official said.

Major Pierre Buyoya, Burundi's military leader, has accused the Tanzanian government of turning a blind eye to the growing Hutu CNDD presence on its soil. After a meeting last month with the former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, who is trying to mediate an end to Burundi's civil war, Maj Buyoya said he was "concerned" about deteriorating relations between the two countries and warned that he feared the border might become "troubled".

Tanzania denies it is giving shelter to the CNDD which launched its war three years ago after Tutsi soldiers assassinated Burundi's first president elected by the Hutu majority. Tanzania's defence minister, Edgar Mookola Ma-

jogo, has warned that any incursion will cost the Burundian army dearly.

"Any nation or group which will threaten the lives of Tanzanians or plans to launch an attack in Tanzanian territory will militarily be wiped out," he said.

There is little doubt where Tanzania's sympathies lie. It has long tolerated Hutu rebels on its soil, including overtly extremist forces, such as the Palipahutu which have targeted Tutsis for slaughter. When Hutu politicians sought a new base after Maj Buyoya seized power in July they chose to set up in Dar es Salaam.

After the refugee camps and rebel bases were cleared in eastern Zaire, fighting flared in Burundi as CNDD insurgents re-entered the country in an attempt to reach Tanzania. Although the army says it targeted only rebels, a UN human rights report has accused the military of murdering at least 1,500 civilians.

Hundreds of residents of the rebel-held city of Goma, eastern Zaire, fled yesterday, saying they feared a counter-attack by Zairean troops after the return of President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Robben Island to stand in tribute

Brendan Boyle in Cape Town

ROBBEN Island, where President Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years behind bars, ended its long history as a place of incarceration yesterday with a signing ceremony giving it a new life as a museum.

"Robben Island will be a powerful reminder to future generations not to repeat the tragedies of the past," said South Africa's correctional services minister, Sipho Mzimela, as he signed over the island to the department of arts and culture. "Robben Island will henceforth in a true sense pay tribute to man's courage in the face of prejudice and racism."

The last prisoners left earlier this month, ending the island's 400-year history as a dumping ground for lunatics, lepers and prisoners.

Mr Mandela, who lived in a cramped cell in the brutal-style sandstone prison from June 1964 until April 1982, put his old friend and fellow prisoner Ahmed Kathrada in charge of charting the island's future.

"The very general idea is that there is going to be a museum on the island," Mr Kathrada said in an interview. "But we have had more than 200 proposals from members of the public on what to do with the island and the final decision will have to be taken by the department of arts and culture."

He said a council would be set up to look at specific

plans for a museum and for development of the rest of the seven-mile long, kidney-shaped island as a nature reserve and tourism destination.

Mr Kathrada said the government had rejected proposals for a casino resort or theme park.

"The harshness and suffering of the prisoners has to be reflected, but the main message of this island should not emphasise suffering, it should be a message of triumph and of hope," he said.

Former prisoners invited to witness the ceremony swapped anecdotes over

The island's main message should be one of triumph and hope

lunch in the island guest-house and were taken on a bus tour of parts of the island they never saw.

Most of the small houses occupied by prison staff were empty and concrete paths were already being broken up by grass sprouting through cracks.

About 3,000 black activists did time on the island, many of them now ministers or officials of South Africa's first democratic government.

At its peak, the maximum security political prison housed almost 800 prisoners. A nearby low-security block was used to house so-called common criminals, who maintained the island. — *Reuter.*

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Britain is suffering from a collective stammer. Stiff-upper-lipped to the last, we don't value the ability to talk to each other until we are silently glaring, arms folded, with no more to say.

G2 cover story

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Truly open government

MPs should not just vote, but be seen to do so

IT WILL come as a surprise to many people, but Parliament as it exists cannot function without the pairing system, under which an MP from a rival party does not vote when a counterpart gives notice of absence from Westminster.

That is the reason for the end-of-term flurry of accusation and counter-accusation between the Conservatives and the Opposition. It is taking place because the Government has lost its majority and is more vulnerable than before to defeat.

Yet the real lesson of these arguments is not that one set of whips is more or less deceitful than the other. In the world of party whips, one is judged by results rather than methods. The real

lesson is that the whole way that British MPs cast their votes is a reactionary anachronism that ought to be brought kicking and screaming out of the 18th century in time for the 21st. Voting at Westminster takes place in lobbies which the public cannot see, following debates from which the overwhelming majority of MPs have been absent, and follows rituals whose pre-modern origins have lost all meaning.

The underlying problem is that Britain has at least 150 more MPs than it needs and than can be accommodated in the Palace of Westminster as presently arranged. This structural inefficiency does nothing to facilitate sensible voting arrangements. From the public's point of view, the need for transparency, a quality deliberately excluded by Westminster's layout and rituals. In an intelligently arranged parliament, there would be a general presumption that all MPs should be present and correct when a vote is called. In ours, that impossibility is the root cause of much — though not all — of the nonsense about pairing, nodding through and the occasionally sordid process of getting the vote out. It is particularly ridiculous that in this day and age MPs should not be visible to the press and public as they vote.

Paedophiles have rights as well

This needs serious debate free from pre-electoral posturing

EVERYONE knows the Home Secretary listens to no one. So what has happened? Suddenly even his pathetic acolytes — his junior ministers who strive to be even more hardline than the Secretary of State — have been expressing doubt, uncertainty and yes, hesitation over what to do about paedophiles.

When even the trigger-happy David Maclean warns about the danger of vigilante law if the address of every released paedophile is provided to the community, it is time to take a pause.

The science of car spotting

Why aren't number plates used in the fight against crime?

THE GOVERNMENT'S proposals to change car plate numbers are utterly myopic. They aim to make marginal changes to the existing letters (like shifting the new registration suffix to other months to cure the August boom) while ignoring how specialised number plates could make a big contribution to crime prevention.

The committee drafting the options should study the Swedish system. It involves having untamperable laminated car number plates that include information — in text and bar codes — like the dates of the registration period, the vehicle identification number, the colour of the car, what type it is and the insurance. At a stroke this makes it easier for car thieves to be identified and saves the police a mountain of money by cutting down time spent trying to determine the true ownership of a car.

child who died in a recent arson attack; and the way it would prompt paedophiles to go underground. He might also have mentioned the fact that although 3,000 paedophiles are serving prison sentences, only about one out of 10 ever gets caught. So the community needs much better safeguards than just a register of addresses of known paedophiles.

A pre-election period is the worst time to produce such a sensitive bill. No one is ready to engage in serious debate as the Tories' deliberate misinterpretation yesterday of Labour's amendment to the current stalking bill demonstrates.

Body language

It says a great deal about the openness of the Body Shop

IT is untrue that Perspectives on Architecture loses £100,000 a month (a house on shirting sands, December 18).

I WAS astonished by your article 'Cool Britannia rules the stoves' (December 17), quoting a chef who was well known years ago. To say that 'our young chefs... are in demand... all over the world' is quite wrong. As for your comment that Britain, therefore, is 'at the forefront of the gastronomic world', it is quite ridiculous. It is difficult enough to erase Britain's bad reputation for its food abroad (now quite undeserved) even without such remarks that will sound risible.



Letters to the Editor

Some notes on euros

IN the wake of the Dublin Summit (Major trails in euro's wake, December 14), I suggest we should be less afraid of the prospect of the 'euro in our pocket' in six years' time than the route which will take us there.

With their eyes on the popular vote, there is worrying consensus among MPs that we must hold a referendum. There are few topics less suitable for this political device.

As a teacher of A-level economics for over 18 years, I know that even more able students find many aspects of monetary and exchange-rate policy difficult to grasp. What chance is there of the majority of voters really understanding the implications of the euro? 'Convergence criteria', 'stability pacts', 'central bank independence' — will this become the stuff of bar-room debate?

Ian Ferguson, 67 Broadland Road, London SE8 1NQ.

Beethoven, Voltaire, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, Picasso, Schubert are all heroes whom we Europeans have in common and who would add vital ingredients to the euro.

What about Aristotle, Descartes, Leonardo, Picasso, and Niels Bohr — seven Europeans of more than national stature from seven countries and five centuries.

Here's my list: Amundsen, Bach, Beethoven, Cervantes, Columbus, Einstein, Freud, Galileo, Homer, Isaac Newton, Magellan, Mercator, Newton, Picasso, Shakespeare, J S Bach, Descartes, Leonardo, Picasso, and Niels Bohr — seven Europeans of more than national stature from seven countries and five centuries.

Geoff Colton, 110 Madeira Avenue, Bromley BR1 4AS.

AT LAST, the building and civil-engineering business has found a champion. The designers of the new notes have thought it appropriate to represent Europe and its achievements solely with objects created by this industry.

Charles H Kingsbury, Chartered Civil Engineer, The Coach House, Church Street, Halloway, Madock, Derbyshire DE4 6AY.

OUR local Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) currency is the Quoy, named after the local river. With an Quoy chequebook one can buy and sell a vast range of services. Perhaps the introduction of the euro, and the demise of sterling, will prove to be a boost to LETS. I am sure that most people would prefer to deal with a meaningful currency that supports their local economy rather than some distant nonsensical exchange that mainly supports big business.

Robert Tomlinson, Director, Living Village Trust, Church Street, Wapping Dock, Liverpool L3.

Body language

IT says a great deal about the openness of the Body Shop

THE euro designers have created a brand new Euro-style 'Turkish Baccarat' Look at all those Turkish crescents formed by fading out EU stars. And those ubiquitous dome shapes. Very European.

John Bingham, Chairman, The Freedom Association (W London), 32 Park Road, London W4 3EH.

Digging into the roots of Ireland's Great Hunger

SIMON Partridge (Letters, December 18) labels John Lahey's article (A hunger for justice, December 16) 'this Sinn Fein view of history'. Invocation of Sinn Fein is a popular refuge for those wishing to escape the facts.

The Great Famine, also inspired by Sinn Fein? In the accompanying book to the series John Percival wrote: 'The famine was only one of the worst periods in 1,000 years of political and economic oppression.'

The 'let the market rule' policy of the British government (with which we are all currently familiar) is well documented by the public statements of the British official with direct responsibility for 'managing' the crisis, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, and his 1948 article, 'The Irish Crisis, in the Edinburgh Review. From 1847 onwards, Onny chequebook one can buy and sell a vast range of services.

Adrian McGrath, West Quay, Wapping Dock, Liverpool L3.

THE point of John Lahey's I highly selective rant appears to be that modern Britons should feel guilty about events that occurred 150 and 300 years ago.

Should all Britons feel guilty? What about Scottish, Welsh, Black or Catholic Britons of those whose families have come here within the last 150 years? I suspect only white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Britons need feel guilty. But why?

Dr Lahey needs to give some careful thought to why certain historical events should be included in the New York human rights curriculum and how to avoid bias in their presentation. He might be able to counter the British Embassy's claim that the state legislature is pandering to Irish Americans but nothing in his article suggests that he can.

Tony DeLimore, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2.

Seoul searching for solutions

YOUR Private View (December 7) is based on a profound misunderstanding of the political reality of Korea.

from the people as the first democratic president. The removal of the old Japanese colonial government building and the reconsideration of whether South Gate should be National Treasure No 1 were carried out because of the ardent desire of the people to liquidate the remnants of Japanese colonialism. It is because of a renewed sense of self-confidence that the Koreans feel they can afford to tackle such issues despite the cost or the way it may appear to outsiders.

Minister Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Korea, 4 Palace Gate, London W8 5NF.

Body language

IT says a great deal about the openness of the Body Shop

IT is untrue that Perspectives on Architecture loses £100,000 a month (a house on shirting sands, December 18).



A rose by any other name

AS a writer from New York who has recently moved to London, I read with some dismay Charlotte Raven's article (Second hand poe, December 17) on the differences between English and American girls. It reduces women on both sides of the Atlantic to feeble caricatures. English girls, it is said, by dint of their reserved natures, have more character; while Americans, with their can-do spirit, are less inhibited.

about sex. There are over 220 million Americans, half of whom are women. The diversity among them is tremendous. You will not be hard pressed to find reserved American girls and can-do English ones. Consider the incredible outrage if differences between races had been discussed in this way.

Had Mrs Crumpacker only known

OH dear, it's possible that I

ANDREW Devine, a friend of my daughter's, recently married a Miss Wright. They are now Mr & Mrs Devine-Wright, though neither rules absolutely in their household.

THE Pine-Coffin family entertained me when I came across it during my research. It was, however, quickly superseded by the 19th-century member of the Toilet-mache family: Lyndal Ydwallo Odu Nestor Egbert Lyonel Toedmas High Erchawryne Saxon Eca Cromwell Orms Nyll Devirt Flanzagenet Tollemache-Tollemache (see Burke's Peerage and Baronetage 1938 p 2435). His elder brother was called Lyonel. Eleanor Loring, 21 Abbey Road, Nottingham NG9 2QF.

A Country Diary

HIGHLANDS: The success of the reintroduction of the sea eagle and red kite tends to overshadow some serious problems facing conservationists in the Highlands.

licence — once again issued mainly to Fishery Boards. This is despite extensive government-funded research that has been unable to produce any evidence that serious 'saw-bills' have done serious damage to fish stocks.

THE success of the reintroduction of the sea eagle and red kite tends to overshadow some serious problems facing conservationists in the Highlands. These are highlighted by the latest attempts by a wide range of people to cull thousands of grey seals in the Western Isles and elsewhere. Ironically if a cull was contemplated then presumably people would be looking at the two major rookeries on the Monach Isles and North Rona — both national nature reserves. However, many seals are already culled under licences issued by the Scottish Office and this is despite the fact that there is no scientific evidence that they are causing serious damage to fisheries. If the case is ever proven then perhaps we should look at our own misguided efforts at reducing fish stocks. Licences for culling seals is not the only problem however as, in the last few years, hundreds of red-breasted mergansers and godswanders have been shot under

Handwritten text at the bottom of the page: 'بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم'

Diary
Matthew Norman

At this time of year it behoves us to think of those less fortunate than ourselves, and Mr JD Hall of Norfolk is doing just that. Mr Hall, chairman of the BMW Drivers Club, writes urging us to befriend our local Gato speed camera. "Have you ever noticed how lonely and void those cameras are?" Mr Hall. "Sitting beside long, straight roads without a friend in the world, they deserve our care and attention."

I AM worried about Terry Major-Ball. His phone was unmanned yesterday after a story about him appeared in the Telegraph. Headlined Crumpet Major, its first paragraph, referring to the accompanying picture, reports that "John Major's fun-loving brother enjoys a cheeky dance with a kachera less than a beauty — as she shows a whole lot of her hot". Oh, my mistake, it's in the Sun. The young lady, Cindy Jackson, whom Terry met at a party, has apparently spent £50,000 on 23 cosmetic operations to let herself become Barbie Doll. You can imagine our concern, Terry, if you see this, for God's sake get in touch.

PETER Barnes writes from Milton Keynes with an enquiry that brings to mind the much-loved children's TV show, Captain Pugwash. "When deciding on the replacement for David Willets," wonders Mr Barnes, "did the Prime Minister take account of the inflationary subliminal message given by repeated media references to Paymaster Bates?" We do not know, but we think we should be told.

SUMMONED by a bleep alarm activated by a woman who had received threats from an ex-husband, PC Ewan McGowan of Humberide was surprised to find the house empty. When his knocking went unanswered, reports Police Magazine, the constable walked round the back, where he found two cats waiting by an unlocked door. He satisfied himself that all was quiet, and left, locking the door and leaving the key with a neighbour — and later that day, the woman rang the local nick to say thanks. She wasn't too thrilled that the constable had let the neighbour's cats in, since they had eaten her parrot, but she was grateful for their concern.

TODAY'S extract from Your Guide To Working For Harriet is a topical one. It is from the section called Pairing. Should you find yourself in Harriet Harman's office ("the Harriet Harman Office" to give it its formal title), know that she is paired with Douglas Hurd. Should he request a pair, and should Harriet agree, "do a brief letter, immediately, to George Mudge MP (the pairing whip) asking if Harriet can pair". Meanwhile, in surprising news, Harriet has asked Donald to pair on a three-line whip before — as a result of exceptional circumstances. You don't need to ask Douglas to pair on a three-line whip. This was written before this week's cheating. Should Labour enforce its threat to cancel pairing, stand by for a seven-page appendix: "Not Pairing".

IN my column yesterday I said that Anne Campbell MP had transferred her House of Commons parking pass to Cherie Booth, QC. I now understand that the pass was transferred to a former secretary to Mr Blair who left before he became leader and that Ms Booth has at no time used the pass. I apologise for any embarrassment this story caused. We will be making a donation to the charity. Refuse.



Human Rights: • Hugo Young on judges • Jon Snow on Saunders • Meg Henderson on bugging

The dawning of the Age of the Judge

Commentary
Hugo Young

THIS is the Age of the Judge. Forget the MP as indomitable tribune of the people. Judges and their processes, rather than politicians and their power of government. The debate about the European Convention on Human Rights has been going on so long that Labour's detailed promise to incorporate it into British law seems a routine banality. Jack Straw, the most venerable of the British blood-worshippers of the house-hold gods, Nor, I suspect, will this be one of those items on which the forces of reaction are awaiting to erupt once Mr Blair is safely in Downing Street. Maturity prevails. At the same time, it is a revolution too many people have an interest in disguising. There are reasons for the modest response. The idea of the ECHR is now infused quite deep in the British bloodstream. Case after case has

both first and last stop in the process. Another trend is relevant. However feverish the political argument about Europe, the courts do not have the luxury of acting Euro-phobic. Quite the contrary. The legal profession has had to become acquainted with the European process, or face death by a thousand cases. Interpreting British statutes by reference to the law of the EC has broadened the range and enriched the intellect of the native judiciary. With several other Euro-conventions already incorporated in domestic law, the ineluctable step of these globalised times, a human-rights convention scarcely presents a novel challenge.

The greatest change, however, has been to the judiciary itself. Its members are still predominantly male, white, middle-class and conservative. The profession has revised its social base and its cultural protections less than any other. Its members are still in which judges work has been transformed in the last two decades. Their fastidious distancing from society is almost entirely gone. An awareness of their role in the politics of government is now universal among them, and public demand means that retreat is not an option. It is part of the sediment of the Thatcher years.

By a strange paradox, the profession most closely associated with a signal deformity of those years, the discovery of multiple and massive miscarriages of justice, continues to be the profession more highly esteemed than any other in the public world. The further enlargement of its role, therefore, looks like a seamless inevitability. This is assisted by general reassurance, on the part both of en-

Even though Ernest Saunders wouldn't answer Jon Snow's questions at his 'press conference', he still has rights, and we should applaud his victory in Strasbourg

Importance of Ernest

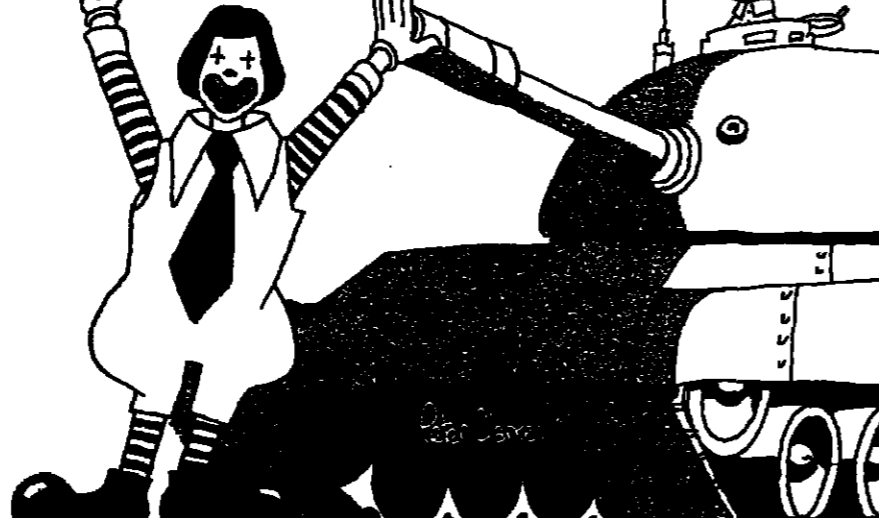
ONCE upon a time the question centred on whether the human rights of members of the National Front were being violated by denying them the right to hold a rally at Lewisham Town Hall. Ernest Saunders has neatly reminded us in the 1990s that human rights, and the Court in Strasbourg, are no respecters of politics. Mr Saunders presents us with a conundrum, and not for the first time. Once it was whether an Alzheimer's-afflicted crook should be shown pity and released from jail early. Now it is whether a crook with the gift of hypochondria and the potential for an Equity card should be offered redress for the violation of his human rights.

having to engage with the circus antics of one of its key defendants. There were moments in his encounter with the media this week when an awkward and rarely experienced sensation began to infect some of those present — a genuine sense of sympathy for the beleaguered Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and the equally embattled Director of the Serious Fraud

from engaging the waiting press and spinning events neatly in his own direction, he was seen exiting down the fire escape. Summoning a news conference in London at an exclusive West End club, our man reads a fine statement with all the gravitas he can muster and then specifies shifts the questions to an associate who speaks in the improbable title of "human-rights consultant". This individual then proceeds to leave our hero looking very much as if the dreaded Alzheimer's burgle had revisited him, rendering him speechless and without an apparent thought in his head. Battling with the complexities of the Guinness trial and its tediously drawn-out aftermath is bad enough without

Office, George Staples, as they continue to try to get to grips with such people. Yet a serious point remains. Ernest Saunders is not alone. The Court in Strasbourg has found in favour of many who have pleaded their cause from what ever quarter. Sadly neither Liberty, Charter 88, Justice nor any other human-rights defending

The Court is no knee-jerk Euro-federalist defender of liberal causes



Turning swords into beef-burgers

'No two countries with a McDonald's ever go to war.' Thomas Friedman's thesis is spurring intense debate among US thinkers

HAVE long had a thesis which finally brought me to Hamburg University at McDonald's headquarters, in Oak Brook, Illinois, to test out. The thesis is this: no two countries that both have a McDonald's have ever fought a war against each other. The McDonald's folks confirmed it. I feared the exception would be the Falklands, but Argentina didn't get a McDonald's until 1986, four years later. Civil wars don't count: McDonald's in Moscow delivered burgers to both sides in the fight between pro- and anti-Yeltsin forces in 1993. Since Israel now has a kosher McDonald's, since Saudi Arabia's McDonald's closes

and for the first time it earned more revenue than McDonald's overseas than from McDonald's America. "If these countries want McDonald's as a symbol of something — an economic maturity and that they are open to foreign investments," says Mr Cantahupo. "I have a parade of ambassadors and trade representatives in here to tell us why McDonald's would be good for their country."

THE question raised by the McDonald's example is whether there is a tip-over point at which a country, by integrating with the global economy, opening itself up to foreign investment and empowering its consumers, permanently restricts its capacity for troublemaking and promotes gradual democratisation and widening peace. Francis Fukuyama, author of The End of History, argues

How I became a dangerous terrorist



Meg Henderson

EARLIER this week I had a call from the editor of my last book. She had apparently been contacted by someone claiming to be an officer with the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Special Branch, and he wanted to ask some questions about one Meg Henderson. Did she have republican sympathies? Was she interested in, and did she write about, political issues? My editor drew herself up to her full five foot two inches and informed him that she did not put such questions to her authors, and, anyway, how did she know he was who he said he was? So she rang Scotland Yard and by degrees was put back through to the chap who had called her; he was indeed who he said he was. It seemed the Anti-Terrorist Squad had picked up a suspect who had been taking a course in creative writing, and on the list of books to read was mine. Indeed, the suspect was actually reading a copy.

The officer wanted to know what this book was about, and rather than read it he asked for an impromptu review. He was, it transpires, "terribly disappointed" that no judge shall have a say. It was no one has to justify beforehand whatever measures the police think reasonable, there will be no considered decision on the strength of evidence, and no compensation when nothing incriminating is found.

AND once again the chill factor comes from the nation's leaders, those upstanding MPs who are, or should be, the guardians of our freedom and liberty, because in the face of the Police Bill, opposition comes there none. Jack Straw, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, has defended his party's support for the Police Bill in the Guardian; he welcomes legalising the illegal acts that have taken place since 1984 and thereby poise the intention of a Labour government to violate the rights of every individual, every voter in the land. There was a time, when Neil Kinnock was leader of the Labour Party, when it was widely said that we suffered from a weak Opposition. We no longer have that problem. Now we have no Opposition at all.

Meg Henderson is the author of Finding Peggy (Corpi, £9.99), and is currently working on something much more sedulous

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The Americans take power

Chris Barrie
Business Correspondent

AMERICAN companies are poised to take control of half Britain's electricity generation industry with yesterday's announcement by the New Orleans-based Entergy Corporation of a £1.28 billion takeover of London Electricity.

Electric remain both independent and untroubled by the latest bidding frenzy. Entergy sought to calm Londoners' fears. Chairman and chief executive, Edwin Lupberger, said the group understood the soul of the city as well as its political and economic status.

Labour is less hostile to Entergy than earlier US bidders. Faced with the inevitability of the American grip on the electricity industry, shadow energy minister John Battle pledged merely to ensure the owners of London Electricity stayed within the regulator's grasp.

Nuclear 'Grand Goof' put LEB buyer on brink of financial disaster

Greg Palast

ENERGY Corporation, the US utility bidding for London Electricity, came close to being taken back into public control six years ago after suffering financial difficulties. The company, which has also tied up a power station deal with BP, was nearly brought back into local government control in 1990 after its finances were hit by write-offs on a \$3.5 billion nuclear power station project, Grand Gulf, which was widely dubbed "Grand Goof".

Regulators have a history of being at loggerheads with Entergy. Brod Bagert, former Louisiana Public Service Commissioner, regulated Entergy's operations in the 1980s. He warned his British counterparts yesterday to "always keep your eyes on your wallet".

Entergy has also been accused of using donations to the Democratic Party to win a coveted place on an August 1994 visit by the then commerce secretary, Ron Brown, to China. An internal commerce department memo, recently made public by the Centre for Public Integrity, indicates that Entergy's chairman, Edwin Lupberger, had been excluded from the trip until a commerce official said that room must be made for "those that were politically connected".

Notebook

Added interest in jobs figures



Edited by Mark Milner

SO MANY Cabinet ministers turned up to greet the announcement of the latest unemployment figures at the Department for Education and Employment yesterday that it might have qualified as a job creation scheme.

Circuit breaker

GREAT news for the Euro-sceptics. By the time the Brussels bureaucrats arrive to take over Britain, they will find it has already been sold to the Americans.

US buys ...

Seaboard: By CSW for £1.6 billion. Customers: 2 million
South Western Electricity: By Southern Company for £1.1bn. Customers: 1.3 million
Midlands Electricity: By Avon Energy Partners for £1.7bn. Customers: 2.2 million

... and bids

Northern Electricity: From CallEnergy and Peterhead. Customers: 1.3 million
East Midlands Electricity: From Donlin Resources. £1.3bn. Customers: 2.3 million
London Electricity: From Entergy Corporation. £1.28bn. Customers: 2 million

BA to sell stake in USAir and end uneasy alliance

Pauline Springett

BRITISH Airways' disastrous alliance with USAir came to an end yesterday when the carrier announced plans to sell its stake in the American airline.

BA's earlier write-down of the investment. Bob Ayling, chief executive of BA, said he regretted the decision to sell the stake. "It has been a costly mistake. It would clearly be unwise to pursue an alliance with an unwilling partner. This has not been brought about by USAir's lawsuit. We still believe the legal action to be groundless."



The UK's most powerful laser beam illuminates the night sky above Stockport, Greater Manchester, after it was switched on yesterday to mark the opening of the Co-operative Bank's telephone banking centre

£432m bid puts oil into troubled waters

Ian King

THE third hostile takeover bid of the week was launched yesterday when Gulf Canada, the oil and gas group, offered \$432 million for the British explorer Clyde Petroleum.

— said it planned to finance the bid by a flotation of its Indonesian business next year, and said it had a \$1 billion bank loan in place. JF Bryan, Gulf's president, said the bid was part of a drive to extend Gulf's activities from the existing core areas of North America and Indonesia.

Bill leaves floated societies prone to takeover

Richard Miles

TREASURY minister Angela Knight yesterday published a draft of the building societies bill that will strip the fledgling banks of their protection from predators if they seek to acquire another financial institution.

— which will still press ahead with conversion in July. Northern Rock, the third building society planning to float next year, declared itself fully satisfied. Its prime worry had been a small group of shareholders holding it to ransom and that anxiety had been removed.

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News in brief

Wessex Water mops up stock

Wessex Water is to spend \$27 million buying back 25 per cent of its stock, using cash put aside for its blocked bid for neighbouring South West Water.

Pizza jobs order

The Pizza Hut restaurant chain is to create 5,000 full-time posts by the year 2000 as part of an expansion programme involving 150 new branches.

Duty-free purchases

LVMH, the French luxury goods group, snapped up 49.9 per cent of DFS, the world's biggest duty-free chain.

Returning cost soars

The expected cost of returning video recorders ready for the launch of Channel 5 next spring is now expected to top \$150 million — about three times the initial estimate but lower than recent industry forecasts.

Hexam refocuses

Hexam, the paper and printing group formerly known as Bowater, has put a number of its non-core businesses up for sale as part of the corporate restructuring programme.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.0530	France 6.4725	Italy 2.230	Singapore 2.29
Austria 1.75	Germany 2.1775	Japan 7.71	South Africa 7.71
Belgium 51.82	Greece 401.20	Netherlands 2.2285	Spain 211.78
Canada 2.28	Hong Kong 72.63	New Zealand 2.3050	Sweden 11.24
Cyprus 0.755	India 58.58	Norway 10.53	Switzerland 2.14
Denmark 5.67	Ireland 0.9750	Portugal 265.25	Turkey 165.726
Finland 7.08	Israel 5.16	Saudi Arabia 5.24	USA 1.8570

Handwritten note: JPL's co. 10/20



Thirty-odd changes massaged the figures down, but just wait for the billboard... Fewer on the dole. As promised

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

THE roll-call of senior ministers who assembled to hail yesterday's jobless figures showed how crucial a moment it was for the Conservatives. Unemployment, for so long the great unmentionable Thatcherism, is now the party's secret weapon.

All the big guns were there: Michael Heseltine, Kenneth Clarke, Gillian Shephard, Ian Lang. And the message was

simple. Forget that the jobless count is still 600,000 higher than it was in May 1979. Ignore the 30-odd changes to the way in which the figures have been massaged downwards over the past 17 years. Skate over the fact that a large chunk of November's spectacular 96,000 drop in the number of people out of work and claiming benefit was the result of one-off factors.

Forget all that. According to the Cabinet's praetorian guard the Conservatives are now the party that can be trusted to reduce unemployment and keep it low.

From now until polling day,

ministers will keep making the comparison between Britain's unemployment record and that of continental Europe. It vindicates the Government's hands-off approach to Brussels and provides a reply to Labour's support for the minimum wage and the social charter.

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke neatly summed up the political strategy in the months ahead. "People have to ask themselves whether they want to carry on getting more propaganda. They have to ask themselves whether they want to feel more secure in their jobs."

Mr Clarke's view is that when risk-averse voters are alone in the ballot box they will think twice about voting for an untried Labour party.

The Government does actually have a case. Unemployment in Britain may be a lot higher than when Jim Callaghan left office in 1979, but the other big European countries are in an even worse state. The French jobless total is over 3 million, while the German dole queues are at their longest since the days of the Third Reich. 4 million and climbing in Britain, by contrast, many economists believe that unemployment, now

standing at 1.93 million, can continue falling.

Senior Treasury officials privately think that a steady expansion of the economy could bring joblessness below 1.5 million, while Professor Patrick Minford, one of the Chancellor's outside advisers, thinks a figure of 1 million would be feasible.

This goes to the nub of the debate. The economic orthodoxy for two decades has been that there is a "natural" unemployment rate, set by the structural make-up of the economy. Any attempt to push the jobless total below the natural rate leads, eventually,

to higher inflation and higher unemployment.

The Government says that its structural reforms of the 1980s and 1990s have led to a lower "natural rate" and so it is possible for the economy to run at lower levels of unemployment without inflation picking up.

The latest official data gives some backing to this thesis. The ease with which employers can shed staff has meant that there has been an explosion in part-time working. According to the Government's Labour Force survey, three quarters of the workers taken on during the summer

were part time. Officials said yesterday that one factor behind November's fall in the jobless count is a big increase in temporary retail staff taken on for Christmas.

In addition, the Job Seekers Allowance has had a big impact since it was introduced in October. The backlog of claims is thought to have exaggerated the November unemployment fall by 20,000, while several thousands more claimants have disappeared from the count, possibly because they were not entitled to be on it in the first place.

There are other factors, conveniently left unmen-

tioned yesterday. First, the brighter unemployment outlook was triggered by a devaluation resisted to the last by the Government. Second, the lack of inflationary pressure in the labour market has been the result of endemic job insecurity.

Politically, the question is whether the public has a short enough memory to forgive the Government for the Black Wednesday fiasco and the recession that went before. Economically, it is whether skill shortages and greater job security triggered by falling unemployment lead to inflationary pressure.

Catering to low paid

Rusholme Job Centre, three miles from the centre of Manchester, placed 134 people in jobs in October, according to latest government statistics.

The majority of positions advertised yesterday were low paid and demanded experience.

The vacancies included:

- Kitchen porters on £2.50 and £3 an hour
- Takeaway chef, £220 for six-day split shift work
- Chinese restaurant head chef, for £12,000 a year
- Ten building jobs including a "hardy person" offered up to £4 an hour
- Twenty security jobs included one at £2.50 an hour for 12 shifts, including some weekends
- Twenty-six jobs for cleaners offered at between £3 and £4.50 an hour, and 14 engineering positions paying £11,000 to £12,500 a year
- Eleven jobs for young people paid between £25 a week and £6,000 a year for office assistants
- Fifteen positions for receptionists, offering about £3.50 to £4 an hour
- Latest vacancies included £4.50 an hour for a youth worker in Rusholme for Sunday mornings
- Wages to be decided for a barber in Moss Side

Those cards tell a different story

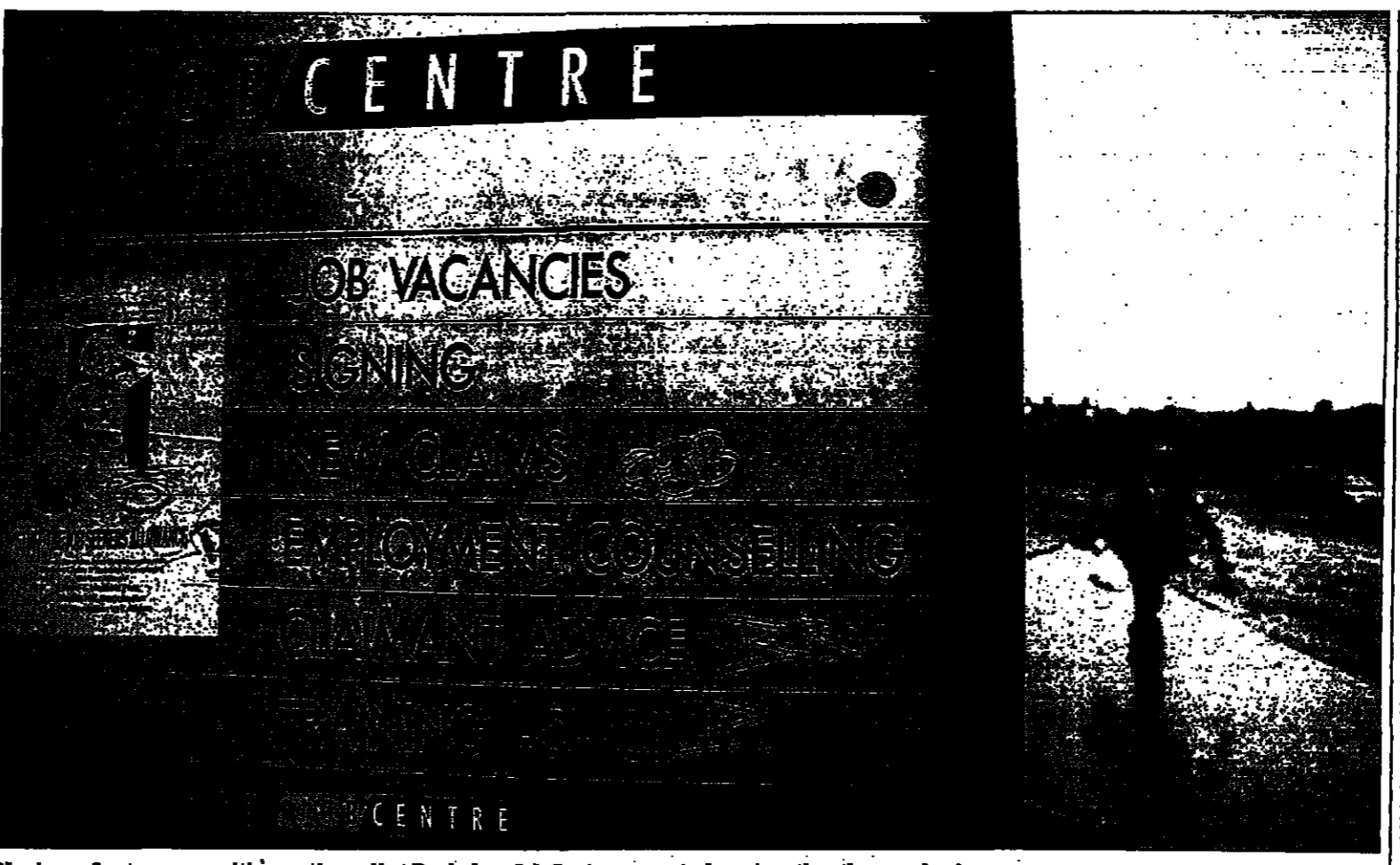
MARTYN HALSALL finds few echoes of Whitehall triumphalism in Manchester

JOB prospects were brighter in inner Manchester yesterday — for a person with five years in purchasing at senior managerial level, preferably with international experience. That could bring a salary of "up to £35,000", one management consultant said.

Otherwise, employment prospects at Rusholme Job Centre had little to match government triumphalism.

Former biology student Gary Smith dissected the Government's euphoria with clinical efficiency. "It's all part-time employment," he said. "I won't be voting Tory; never have and never will."

Rusholme, Manchester's



No signs of upturn... writing on the wall at Rusholme Job Centre suggests despair rather than euphoria

and student capital, lies within the Gorton constituency, where 5,220 people are seeking work. The Job Centre, which plays soft rock to rows of people waiting to sign on, last month advertised only 138 vacancies.

Gary Smith was looking for bar work, ideally paying £200-£250 a week. Hav-

ing failed his first-year examinations, he was ineligible for a grant and faced servicing a student loan and court action from his landlord over unpaid rent.

Recently he found a bar in Manchester offering £200 a week for a training period "and after that they say it's going to go up a bit".

With his friend Richard

Lewis, who had to leave his university course because of ill-health, he was hoping two years' work would erase his debts and help him re-start his studies.

Richard said: "I'm just looking for any income at all, to start with. Around £200 to £250 a week is what I need." Yesterday he was facing a long walk to the

Job Centre with 12p in his pocket.

There were 16 cards advertising bar work, at between £3.25 and £4 an hour. One offered £136.50 a week for three months, then £148 in a city centre hotel. The successful applicant would "work until the last customers leave".

Brendan Devlin was seek-

ing work as a cabinet-maker after three months unemployed through illness. He said: "It's a bad time, Christmas. People are all out buying presents; they're not buying furniture."

He was philosophical about wage expectations: "At my age — 50 — you can't be too specific; you take what you can get."

Rise in sales points to a Christmas 'boomlet'

Charlotte Denry

BITAIN'S stores look likely to have a bumper Christmas after last month's retail sales figures showed a sharp increase in activity.

The Office for National Statistics said the volume of business in shops and stores in November rose by 0.7 per cent — higher than most forecasts were expecting.

The volume of sales in the three months to November was 0.8 per cent up on the previous quarter and 3.9 per cent higher than in the same three months of 1995.

In value terms, weekly sales over the month averaged £3,600 million, more than 8 per cent higher than in November last year.

Jonathan Loynes of HSBC Markets said he thought the figures showed a "boomlet" rather than a boom. "Consumers haven't significantly reduced their debt levels since the depths of the recession so they are not feeling as footloose as they were during the boom of the late 1980s."

However, the continuing strength of consumer demand is likely to fuel fears that retailers may try to rebuild their profit margins. Analysts said there was some evidence of this in the clothing and footwear sector which saw a record price increase in September. Sales of clothing continued to grow last month, but the figures for the last three months suggested the price rise had flattened out demand.

Power 'usurped' by OfTel chief

Nicholas Bamister
Technology Editor

DON CRUICKSHANK, the director general of OfTel, would next year have the power to break up British Telecom's network — even though this was not what Parliament intended, the High Court was told yesterday.

Roger Henderson, QC, representing BT, said that the telecom group feared that an OfTel director general could use powers in a new licence clause outlawing any anti-competitive behaviour to force the group to dispose of some of its network.

BT is challenging Mr Cruickshank's right to assume the new fair trading powers through a judicial review. The licence amendments come into effect next year.

Mr Henderson told the Court that the only authority able to force up its network was the secretary of state for trade and industry, after he had secured the approval of both houses of Parliament.

He claimed Mr Cruickshank had usurped that authority, by stating that the new anti-competitive clause

covered not only the provision of services over the network, which was his responsibility as regulator, but also "the running of a telecom network", which was not.

Commenting on Mr Cruickshank's assumption of greater fair trading powers, Mr Henderson said: "The director general is trespassing on the role of others, abrogating to himself their powers, and then going beyond them."

He said Mr Cruickshank, who wanted to be pro-active rather than reactive in the national interest, was dissatisfied with a regulatory regime which had "delays and repetitive aspects".

Gerald Barring, QC, a member of BT's legal team specialising in European law, told Lord Justice Phillips and Mr Justice Hooper that the new clause was at odds with Britain's obligations under Community law, which required "legal certainty".

The government had to take action to prevent uncertainty arising, he said. But the new BT licence clause was bound to result in legal uncertainty and confusion, not least because it was so general in nature and because there was considerable overlap in jurisdiction between OfTel and the European authorities.

Underside Dan Atkinson

HELMS-BURTON, Brother Yank's bullying attempt to export his Cuba obsession to the civilised world, may be about to claim a new victim: Admiral William Crowe, US ambassador to the United Kingdom. His Excellency was spotted puffing on a great stonk of a cigar. Close inspection revealed a "Communist threat" to our criminal law. Sixteen judges voted in favour, but who were the four who naysayed Ernie? Judge Martens for one (v. distinguished Dutch jurist, then Judge Kutrs (Lithuanian) and Judges Valticos and Gölcükli, respectively a Greek and a Turk. That's right: Ernie has united Europe's two bitterest enemies in opposition to himself. Maybe we ought to consider sending him to Cyprus.

DATELINE Strasbourg (1): Is the steel and glass monolith going up by the river a new bank HQ? Nope: this is the new "hemicycle" for the European Parliament, courtesy the Stras. city fathers. But, hold up, didn't the burghers of Brussels just spend billions on a new parliament building? Too true, hence this costly response from the Union's second city. The Brussels-Strasbourg tussle is getting nasty: spotted on the bus stop outside the (old) parliament is the simple claim, "Capital of Europe".

DATELINE Strasbourg (2): Over the river from the Euro-MPs

soon-to-be home is Richard Rogers's new-ish building housing the human rights court, scene of ol' Deadly Ernest's Tuesday triumph. Not many laughs here, although an amusing error in the submission of Saunders's QC, Michael Beloff, had him describe the placing of the burden of proof on the Crown as "the famous 'golden thread' of our criminal law". Sixteen judges voted in favour, but who were the four who naysayed Ernie? Judge Martens for one (v. distinguished Dutch jurist, then Judge Kutrs (Lithuanian) and Judges Valticos and Gölcükli, respectively a Greek and a Turk. That's right: Ernie has united Europe's two bitterest enemies in opposition to himself. Maybe we ought to consider sending him to Cyprus.



SPARE a thought for the recent journeyings of Kno Lin, assistant director at the Commercial Crime Bureau, the UK-based international fraud-busting operation, which recently helped the Vanuatu government recover millions of dollars-worth of bonds. Alleged prime-mover, Peter Swanson, is on trial and Mr Kno headed out to appear as an expert witness. The voyage: London to Los Angeles, on to Auckland, then to Vanuatu, took about three days in the air. Is the CCB taking its "go anywhere" remit too literally?

The British Are Back but the Russians Are Coming! crows Knight, Frank (Rutley, like Hopkirk, would seem to be deceased) in a bulletin cheer-ing an "unexpected influx of [property] buyers from eastern Europe" at the top end of the market. Is this good news? What ever next? The Triads Are Coming!

JOLLY japes at the Treasury yesterday as the ministry's top forecasters [sic] applied their grey cells to a Christmas quiz devised by Gus O'Donnell, ex-Major media minder and soon-to-be top Treasury man in Washington. The tie-breaker was identifying a pic of 19-year-old Alan Budd. And the prize? A deck of Tarot cards (on the basis, presumably, that anything's worth a try).

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Racing

Bookmakers bet only One Man in mind

Non Cox

BOOKMAKERS are not renowned for their generosity, but even they are taking the Scrooge factor to extreme lengths in offering One Man at 6-4 on for the Peterborough King George VI Chase at Kempton on Boxing Day.

In January, when the King George was run at Sandown, One Man wasn't seriously challenged when coming home 14 lengths clear of Monsieur Le Cure, with Master Oats third and the ubiquitous Young Hustler fifth.

Four lengths second to imperial Call in the Gold Cup, well clear of One Man, he won the Racing Post Chase over the Kempton course and distance despite a supposed preference for racing left-handed.

He will come on a lot for the run, so we will keep our options open. If he comes out bounding in the morning and does well afterwards, there is every chance he will run at Kempton. If he doesn't, then he won't," said Pitman.

Dunwoody trip to pay off

EVEN BLUE, who was set to take on One Man and Rough Quest in the abandoned Tommy Whittle Chase at Haydock last Saturday, has his sights lowered considerably at Towcester today in the Ladbroke Handicap Chase, writes Ron Cox.

There is a definite Aintree look about Even Blue, who changes well, stays well and, at eight years of age, has some improvement in him.

Small stables which hit a purple patch, for whatever reason, are well worth keeping an eye on. One such this term is the Richmond, Yorkshire, establishment of Anne Swinbank.

The visored nine-year-old was completing a long range double for the in-form Mickey Hammond, also on the mark with Monymann at Catterick.



Forward motion... Ludger Beerbaum of Germany and Future in full flow at Olympia yesterday

PAUL DARRAGH on Scandal was the Christmas Candle Stakes at the International Championships here in convincing style yesterday, writes John Kerr at Olympia.

Both riders picked up points to qualify for today's Masters Championship, which will be contested by seven riders chasing a top prize of £21,000.

Curragh also won last month's Brussels Grand Prix on the eight-year-old Australian-bred Scandal, a former racehorse who at one time was under consideration for that country's Olympic team and is now owned by the Jordanian princess Haya.

The Petplan Family Relay, a curtain-raiser to the five-day show, went to William Funnell on Comex and his wife Pippa on The Tourmaline Rose.

Wolverhampton all-weather Flat programme

Table listing race details for Wolverhampton all-weather Flat programme, including race numbers, names, and times.

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Towcester card with guide to the form

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Advertisement for RACELINE featuring a logo and contact information for Towcester and Wolverhampton.

Soccer

Coca-Cola Cup, fourth-round replays
Stockport County 2, West Ham United 1

Angell gives Hammers a kiss of death

Paul Fitzpatrick

AFTER a disappointing start to the season, Stockport County have climbed steadily up the Second Division. They are now sixth and within striking distance of the leaders, Brentford, and promotion remains their priority.

But they are not going to depart their other theatres of activity, Coca-Cola Cup, FA Cup or even the Autoglass Wintereen Shield, without a fight. They are enjoying one of the most exciting and potentially lucrative periods of their history and West Ham felt the full force of their ambition at Edeley Park last night.

County have never been to the quarter-finals of a major cup competition before but they ended that long drought in style. One of their goals was a gift but they did more than enough here to suggest that previous victories over Blackburn Rovers and Sheffield United were not flukes.

This victory was certainly not, and a home tie against Southampton will keep the pot bubbling nicely. Julian Dicks headed West Ham in front from a corner in the 21st minute but their joy was short-lived. Within five minutes County had not only nullified their opponents' advantage but had taken the lead themselves through an extraordinary own-goal and a header by the dangerous Angell.

The level of skill from both sides was high despite a saturated pitch that, with the rain continuing steadily, was unlikely to improve. Although it was a night when defensive errors might have proliferated for the opening 20 minutes neither goalkeeper was seriously tested.

After that relatively uneventful opening the game suddenly exploded to life with two goals within a minute. First, Dicks, from Dumitrescu's corner, met the ball with such force that Jones in the Stockport goal was left helpless.

Such force that Jones in the Stockport goal was left helpless. The own-goal that brought Stockport their equaliser was bizarre. Flynn's long throw came back to him; he returned the ball and Dowie, supposedly helping out his defence, beat his own goalkeeper with a header that could not have been placed more perfectly. It was a half Dowie will want to forget, for the forward made way for Williamson in the 38th minute after apparently twisting his knee.

Stockport's second goal was much more orthodox: textbook in fact. Bennett, emerging as one of the night's most influential figures, picked out Angell with a precise cross from the left and the header that followed beat Miklosko emphatically.

Three times in the early part of the second half, Miklosko was forced to make desperate clearances with his feet. These were clear signs of West Ham's mounting defensive anxieties. It could have been even worse and on two occasions in a five minute spell Armstrong might have put the tie beyond the reach of the Londoners.

The striker broke clear along the left and angled in on goal but his shot was parried by Miklosko. Armstrong then worked his way into an inviting position in the penalty area, should have scored, but was too deliberate in his finish and Miklosko saved more easily than he should have done.

Such force that Jones in the Stockport goal was left helpless. The own-goal that brought Stockport their equaliser was bizarre. Flynn's long throw came back to him; he returned the ball and Dowie, supposedly helping out his defence, beat his own goalkeeper with a header that could not have been placed more perfectly. It was a half Dowie will want to forget, for the forward made way for Williamson in the 38th minute after apparently twisting his knee.

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Don't look now... Southampton's goalkeeper Bessant sees off a challenge from the similarly unsighted Oxford centre-half Elliott

PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE HEWITT

Southampton 3, Oxford United 2

Berkovic leads line as Saints hang on

Paul Weaver

SOUTHAMPTON ultimately went through from this absorbing Coca-Cola Cup fourth-round replay, but for the second time in three weeks they were fully stretched by Oxford.

Oxford midfielder shot over. More ominously for Oxford, Berkovic's first set started to trace subtle patterns through which were repeatedly out-maneuvred in the middle stages of the first half but they continued to create chances. Jenson's 20th-minute cross was headed down by Pura and Elliott's volley sent the ball screaming over.

Berkovic provided the through-ball and Oostenstad cleverly rounded the goalkeeper only to shoot against the left post. But in the 59th minute Berkovic's shot was only parried by Whitehead and Oostenstad made it 3-1. A minute later Bob Ford ran 25 yards and scored with a curling 30-yard drive to make it 3-2.

The match reached a crescendo in the second half with three goals in seven minutes, and there should have been more. Southampton went 2-1 up in the 83rd minute after a free-kick on the edge of the penalty area. Magilton's first effort rebounded from the wall but he followed up with a curling left-foot cross and Dryden jumped above a hesitant defence to nod past Whitehead.

Southampton should have killed the tie a minute later. Berkovic provided the through-ball and Oostenstad cleverly rounded the goalkeeper only to shoot against the left post.

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Second Division

Millwall 0, Luton Town 1

Hughes hoists Luton to top

Trevor Haylett

LUTON will celebrate Lawrence's first anniversary in charge later this week as leaders of the Second Division, after a Ceri Hughes goal 30 seconds from the end ruined Millwall's own hopes of taking over on top from Brentford.

With Mark Bright, their loan signing from Sheffield Wednesday, prominent in attack, Millwall impressed when they were able to turn their opposing full-backs and after 26 minutes Van Blerk's low cross from the left delivered a better response than Hartley's skier.

Liverpool apology to Sugar

LIVERPOOL have formally apologised to Alan Sugar for a newspaper article in which Neil Ruddock attacked the Tottenham chairman's running of his club.

Sugar must take the blame for Spurs' decline, and the only way I can see things happening is if he goes. Sugar retorted: "I'm not going to bring myself down to their level by discussing it. But I have made an official complaint to the FA and have requested that they think about taking disciplinary action."

Celtic ready to release Van Hooydonk

Patrick Glenn

CELTIC are ready to sell Pierre van Hooydonk after the Dutch striker dismissed the club's offer of a \$7,000-a-week contract as "good for the hopeless but not for an international striker".

Tommy Burns, the club's manager, is apparently seething over Van Hooydonk's dismissal, made in a tabloid newspaper in which he has a regular column. Burns regards it as an appalling insult to hopeless people.

Van Hooydonk was also accused by Burns earlier this season of refusing to follow orders. Now thoroughly fed up with the player's apparent recalcitrance, Celtic will circulate agents informing them he is for sale.

His availability will be made official as soon as the club chairman Fergus McCann returns to work. McCann is absent because of a virus, and his formal approval is needed. It is expected to be given.

Celtic paid NAC Breda £1.2 million for Van Hooydonk in January 1995 and he has scored more than 50 goals since his move to Scotland. The Glasgow club will be looking for something in the region of \$3 million.

The 72 Football League chairmen are expected to agree a restructuring plan at an agm in London today, despite concern in some Second and Third Division clubs about the power it will give those of the First. Under the plan the six-man board of directors will be replaced by a nine-man body, elected on both a regional and divisional basis, with an independent chairman.

Results

Table with columns for Soccer, Chess, and Equestrian. Soccer includes Coca-Cola Cup and Nationwide League. Chess lists various tournaments. Equestrian lists showjumping events.

Fixtures

Table listing upcoming fixtures for various leagues including National League, Scottish League, and Rugby Union.

Books

The way things were

In 1905 it was sixpence a fortnight. Now the cost is £40 but David Lacey values it

THE past always catches up at Christmas. That is the nostalgic nature of the best. But this time, among the annual clutter of football publications, it has made a notable late run past the ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties and things that go bump on the bookshelves.

Once a week, and once a year only, the man have ball practice. It reports. This consisted largely of desultory shooting and dribbling sessions. Men get nothing like as much actual work with the ball as they need, Basset argues, but nearly 50 years later Danny Blanchflower was being told at Barmsey that if he saw less of the ball during the week he would be all the more eager to get it on Saturday afternoons.

Boxing

Lewis in limbo as McCall goes missing

FEARS that Oliver McCall would not be fit to fight Lennox Lewis for the vacant World Boxing Council heavy-weight title in Nashville, Tennessee on February 7 were strengthened yesterday when the wild man of American boxing failed to attend a press conference in New York.

McCall, last seen in public throwing a Christmas tree across a hotel lobby in Nashville at the weekend, and now facing charges of vandalism, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest, has a history of street trouble and drug abuse. The fighter who took the WBC title from Lewis in October 1994 before surrendering meekly to Frank Bruno last year was lying low yesterday.

Bookish reference: 'The way things were' by David Lacey, published by David Lacey.

Vertical text on the right edge of the page, possibly bleed-through or a watermark, including the word 'McCall' and other partially legible text.

SportsGuardian

SOCCER

Sheffield Wed 1, Manchester United 1

Scholes produces Carbone copy

Michael Walker

ON a fifth night in south Yorkshire Sheffield Wednesday and Manchester United contrived 90 minutes of hugely entertaining, clean and skilful football and ultimately neither were flattered by their Premiership point.

Wednesday jumped two places to eighth in the table but must be cursing the considerable figure of Peter Schmeichel, who made half a dozen vital saves. United, on the other hand, could argue that, after Paul Scholes had equalised Benito Carbone's beautiful 56th-minute opener with an equally impressive strike, they finished the stronger.

The start was delayed to accommodate the large numbers stuck in traffic. Those who still missed the kick-off also missed Manchester United's Christmas novelty — a team without Beckham, presumably rested, not dropped, for the first time in the league this season. This meant a role for Scholes, but in a midfield that included Johnsen, and that left Solskjaer alone up front except for the odd excursion from Cantona.

Initially this seemed an ideal plan as Fressman dived to save from Johnsen and then Giggs burst free from Johnsen's pass and Solskjaer's dummy, only to put a sloppy side-footed shot wide.

Three minutes had gone but it was to be half an hour before United carried a similar threat, Fressman back-flipping to tip over Scholes's flying header. Between and afterwards, though, in an enthralling first half all the dam-

ger came from Wednesday. And it was far from cavalry charge football with Carbone an intelligent baton master.

Five times Schmeichel was forced into significant action with Hyde, Whittingham and Atherton all clean through. So, too, was Pembroke but he blasted over and then fluffed a sitter from four yards after the goalkeeper had parried his original effort. Schmeichel's best save, however, was probably the one he knew least about. In the 17th minute a Carbone free-kick skidded off the greasy turf and caught Schmeichel around the windpipe.

Wednesday were able to achieve such domination because they had better shape and balance than United, a greater fluency in their passing and extreme industry. Eleven minutes after half-time it paid off. Trustful, having replaced Hyde just before the interval, moved towards the United area and slipped a cute ball to Carbone on the edge of the D. The diminutive Italian sized up the situation instantly and curled the ball round Schmeichel's sprawl.

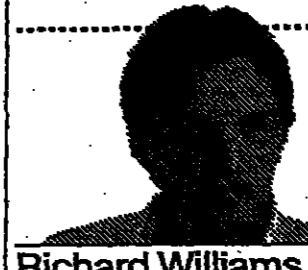
At the same time United began to demonstrate a new urgency. Within five minutes Scholes, having pulled a fine save from Fressman, brought them level. The goal had scrappy origins — a long kick followed by a mis-kick from Nicol — but Scholes' left-foot drive was far from imperfect and flew into the top corner with Fressman nowhere.

Sheffield Wednesday: Pressman; Atherton, Walker, Sotanić, Wood, Nolan, Hyde (Trustful), Aspin, Pembroke, Whittingham, Carbone, Booth (first 77).
Manchester United: Schmeichel; G Neville (Boschman, 71), May, Pallister, Irwin, Johnsen, Butt, Giggs, Scholes, Cantona, Solskjaer.
Referee: P. Dawson (Leicester).



Step ahead... Stockport's Marsden gets a shot in under challenge from West Ham's Porfirio. Report, page 22 PHIL COLE

Cesare gives Italy classic call to arms



Richard Williams

WATCH out, Glenn Hoddle. When you lead England out of the Wembley tunnel to face Italy in the World Cup qualifier on February 12, the man next to you will be remembering the greatest day of his life.

Cesare Maldini, Italy's new manager, has been to Wembley before and can recommend the experience. On May 22 1963 he climbed the steps to the Royal Box as captain of Milan to collect the European Cup, the first of the club's five victories in the competition. A mere 45,000 had turned up to see two goals from Jose Altafini, Milan's Brazilian striker, defeat Benfica, whose sole reply came from Eusebio.

Maldini had retired from the sweeper's position by the time Milan next reached the final, six years later. Nowadays he is probably best known outside Italy as the father of the prodigious Paolo Maldini, one of the world's outstanding defenders and owner of three European Cup winner's medals.

But Cesare was there in Spain in 1982, as assistant coach to Enzo Bearzot when Italy beat West Germany to win the World Cup, before moving on to manage the Olympic and under-21 sides, capturing three European under-21 titles in a row. And he has been waiting in the wings all through the lengthy final stages of Arrigo Sacchi's reign as national coach.

Sacchi may have taken his team to the final of the 1994 World Cup but in many eyes the players got there despite their coach, whose only reliable trait was the consistency with which he preferred journeyman to players of real talent. The exception, in USA 94, was Roberto Baggio, without whose flickering genius Italy would not have made it to the knock-out stages.

So what happened next? Sacchi resigned Baggio to the wilderness as he prepared the formation that eventually capitulated in England last summer. And this winter he presided over unconvincing wins against Moldova and Georgia.

Sacchi's position had been jostled by the president of the Italian federation, who

had given him a deal worth a million pounds a year, lasting through the 1998 World Cup. But a change of presidency meant that Sacchi would no longer be indulged — although to sack him would have meant coughing up the balance of the contract, close to £2 million.

Then, as if by divine intervention, the mutual desire of Sacchi and the federation to see the back of each other coincided with Milan's urgent need to offload the Uruguayan coach Oscar Tabarez after a defeat-riddled start to the season. Silvio Berlusconi solved a lot of people's problems when he agreed to take over the remainder of Sacchi's contract and bring him back to his old club.

Maldini, by contrast, is being paid a mere £250,000 a year to take the *Azzurri* to the 1998 World Cup. And he takes the job in the knowledge that he was almost certainly not the new president's first choice.

Fabio Capello, the most obvious candidate after five years spent filling Milan's trophy cabinets, is riding high at the top of the Spanish league in his first season at Real Madrid, and could not be tempted. Giovanni Trapattoni, who played alongside Maldini at Wembley 33 years ago, is in a similar position with Bayern Munich, where he is bound by a two-year contract. And presumably Gianni Agnelli would bring down the government rather than lose Marcello Lippi, whose daringly rebuilt Juventus are heading for the championship and a second consecutive European Cup.

NEVERTHELESS Maldini's appointment is probably bad news for Hoddle. "Our job is to restore the public's affection, to give certain values back to our team," Maldini told reporters in Rome this week, noting that the public had been "perplexed" by his predecessor's tactics.

What this means is plain. Maldini will be planning a return to the old counter-attacking style of Italian football, which he imposed on his under-21 sides even while Sacchi was trying to get the senior team to adopt the "pressing" strategy he had introduced so successfully at Milan.

So, in place of Sacchi's confused and demoralised bunch, Hoddle's England will be facing a team fired up to get their new manager off to a winning start. And it will be no surprise if there is once again a blue shirt for a skinny little Buddhist with a ponytail, who would like nothing better than to give Cesare Maldini another day to remember at Wembley.

Newcastle float a new home and future

Russell Thomas

NEWCASTLE UNITED will today underwrite their desire to be among Europe's footballing elite by unveiling plans for a new stadium and a stock market flotation.

The new home for Sir John Hall's club is likely to be in the city and have an initial 50,000 all-seated capacity, with scope to rise to 70,000, making it the biggest club stadium in Britain.

It is thought that only the football club in Sir John's sporting portfolio will move for a full market listing, with the new holding company's valuation exceeding £150 million. That would see Newcastle become the second-biggest soccer franchise in England after Manchester United.

The twin projects will give Newcastle even more financial muscle in the sport, which the chairman says "will be transformed in the next five or seven

years" with "mega-money" flowing in.

A move to a 70,000-capacity stadium, double St James' Park's capacity, would see Newcastle maximise gate revenue. It would also enable many more fans to see their team in the flesh on a regular basis.

"We're very conscious that the kids can't get in," Sir John said. "The next generation can't get into the stadium. We've been too successful."

Newcastle considered

moving over the Tyne to Gateshead but it appears that the council wants to keep the club in the city. United's preferred site is believed to be on Castle Leazes Moor.

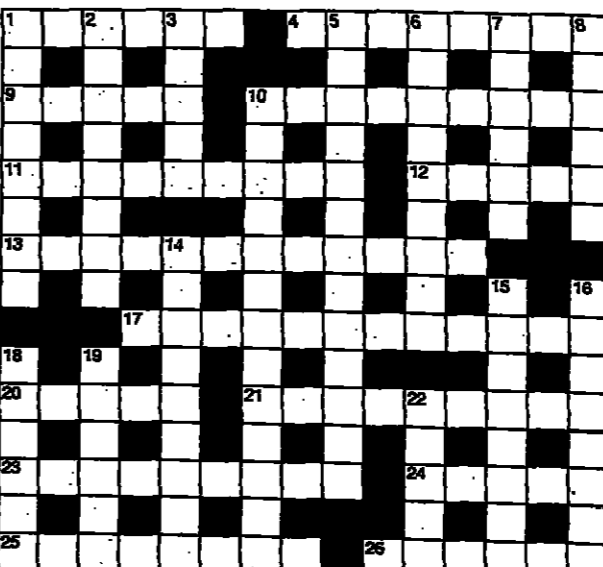
Newcastle must have a team to match the grand plan and that means Kevin Keegan's side winning a trophy, sooner rather than later. But although the Uefa Cup remains in sight the Premiership title is now slipping away.

"The European League

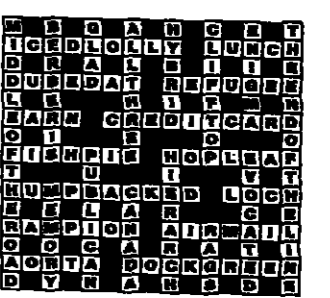
will come," said Sir John, "and I have to get Newcastle there. But if we could only win something the pressure would be taken off the club and entry would become automatic."

Guardian Crossword No 20,840

Set by Enigmatist



- Across**
- 1 Degrade servant or pie? (6)
 - 4 Cart with no top? Note: this'll help 17 (8)
 - 9 15 entertainment (5)
 - 10 Bird changes colour (9)
 - 11 Dead runners lacking? (9)
 - 12 One arrested by beak for interference (6)
 - 13 Partly-tuned orchestra's last arrangement — wasn't in form (8,6)
 - 17 Take out insurance and pass round painter's foil (5,7)
 - 20,22 Tooth-puller's retreat? (5,5)
 - 21 A biscuit for dog? It has several (5,4)
 - 23 It transports a tot, drunk in bar, lurching round (4-5)
 - 24 Not 9? Then gown could be manufactured (5)
- Down**
- 2 Time, when short, helps one get 15 (6)
 - 26 Cheers for model (6)
 - 1 Tars seed in garden measure (8)
 - 2 Explorer crossing island is a p-pin up! (8)
 - 3 Undercurrent (5)
 - 5 Frequently discerns score for performance (5,3,2,3)
 - 6 Don's mount, Northern Worker, runs into Cider Drinker (9)
 - 7 Seein' chance to participate (4-2)
 - 8 One with story requiring qualification (1-5)
 - 10 Might you see Thatcher slope here? (3,5,5)
 - 14 Here's life, at least comfortable near spring? (9)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,840

GRRRACEFUL NOTES.

Just roll it round your tongue.

GRRRAHAM'S PORT

GRAHAM'S THE PORT OF AUTHORITY

صكنا من الاميل